



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

EDITH SYDNEY

A TALE



600078331S







# EDITH SYDNEY:

A Tale.

BY

F. M. OXENHAM.



BURNS, OATES, & CO.,  
17 & 18, PORTMAN STREET, PORTMAN SQUARE,  
AND 63, PATERNOSTER ROW.

MDCCCLXVIII.

[All rights reserved.]

250. g 363.

WYMAN AND SONS, PRINTERS,  
GREAT QUEEN STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS,  
LONDON, W.C.

Dedicated, by Permission,

TO

THE VERY REV. F. ELZEAR TORREGIANI,

TO WHOSE SELF-DEVOTION AND PERSEVERING ZEAL,

THE MISSIONS, FOR WHOSE BENEFIT THIS LITTLE WORK IS PUBLISHED,

OWE THEIR FORMATION,

AND IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF UNWEARIED KINDNESS

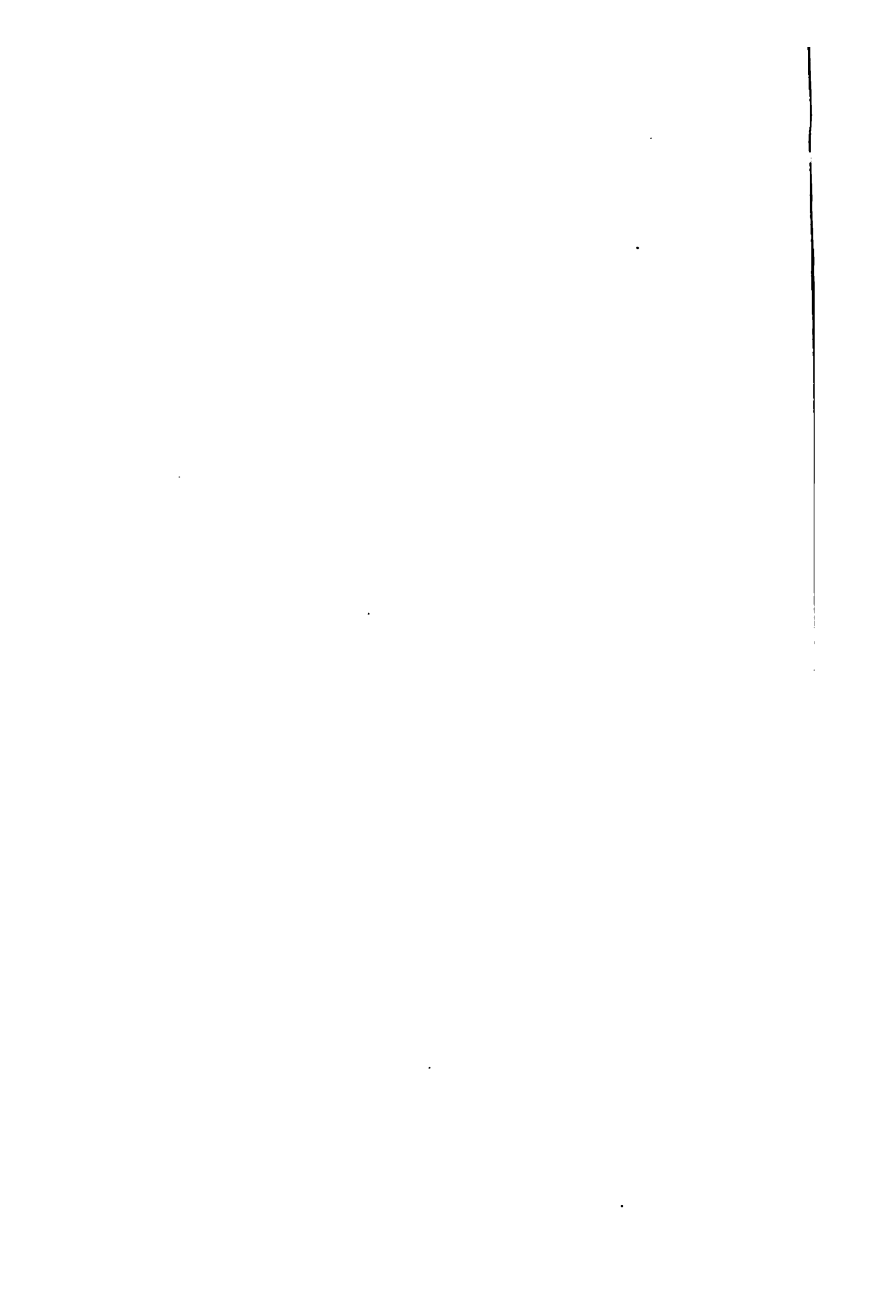
SUCH AS NO WORDS COULD EXPRESS.

F. M. OXENHAM.

PONTYPOOL,

*Feast of All Saints, 1867.*





# EDITH SYDNEY.



## CHAPTER I.

There are who sigh that no fond heart is theirs ;  
None loves them best.—*Christian Year.*

“*Bella Napoli!*” What a world of bright sunny memories or of glowing imaginations these two words contain! “Beautiful,” absolutely and perfectly beautiful, is the undisputed, unchallenged title of the Bay of Naples. Venice, the City of the Sea, on her thousand islands, with her magnificent palaces, the very ruins of which are more noble than any buildings the world will ever see again—Venice, once more than royal in her magnificence, sits an uncrowned queen watching the silent, ceaseless beating of the waves upon the steps of her throne. Genoa, with her wealth and her pride, is almost a forgotten name; while Naples, who never had either Doge, or painter, or merchant, to make her name famous in the world,—Naples still reigns supreme by the quiet power of her own loveliness.

It was the hour of sunset: scarcely a breeze

curled the waves in the bay, the sails of a few little fishing-boats flapped idly against their masts, the rowers of a small pleasure skiff were resting on their oars, a few persons walking on the shore stood still; there was an evident expectation of something. Suddenly, in one moment, the sun was lost under the horizon; and instantly from all the churches in Naples rang out the *Ave Maria*. Then again the sails were strained to the mast and set to catch the first breath of wind, the oars were dipped into the sea and splashed merrily as the pleasure-party returned to the shore, and the ramblers on the beach continued their walk.

There was one who had neither stood still, nor listened for the bells, nor joined in the Angelus; one who had gazed with contemptuous scorn at the rough fishermen knelt in their boats, and with a sarcastic smile at a priest who reverently crossed himself as she passed him — a young English girl. Her figure was tall and stately; and while she walked with that perfect ease and grace which is the peculiar heirloom of England's high-born daughters, there was a firmness and decision in her tread, and an expression of haughty defiance in her eye, which seemed hardly consistent with the freshness and elasticity of youth. And yet Edith Sydney had only just entered her nineteenth year: what right had she to walk as if she were crushing the whole world under her feet at every step? What had it done to her, or she to it, that even at that early age she had nothing left for it but scorn?

That evening's scene was no new one to her;

day after day she had witnessed it, for day after day she had come to watch the sunset on that southern shore.

Where the summer hath no twilight,  
And the salt sea hath no tide.

Often too she had sketched it; for Edith was a true artist, and though she despised the *reality* of Catholic devotion, she fully appreciated its *æsthetic* beauty. But this evening her thoughts were evidently little occupied even with "the beautiful" in the scene before her; after that one scornful gaze, her brow contracted as if with some keen suffering, and as she passed on to a lonely part of the beach a short quick sigh escaped her. Something moved close to her; she started, for she had fancied herself alone, and looking down she saw a child, perhaps five years old, kneeling on the ground with a rosary in his fingers. His eyes were fixed intently on a red streak in the sky; they were those large lustrous eyes, soft and yet passionate, which are seldom met with in our cold northern land, and their expression was one of pure, simple, childlike love. Everything beautiful, either in nature or art, had a peculiar charm for Edith; and, stooping down, she kissed the child's brow, at the same time asking his name.

"Leonardo, signora," replied the child.

"Ah," thought she, "a painter's name, and a painter's eye. I wonder if Leonardo da Vinci had eyes like that?"

Meanwhile the child went quietly on with his rosary.

"Who taught you to pray?" asked Edith abruptly.

The child looked a little surprised, but replied at once:

"Padre Giuseppe."

"O, a priest!" said Edith, with the slightest possible shrug of her shoulders. But children are quicker of observation than many of us think, and little Leonardo fired up at the implied slight, and poured forth a rapid and energetic panegyric on Father Joseph.

"Well, well, never mind all that," said Edith impatiently, and very unceremoniously cutting short a list of his virtues; "tell me where you live, and what you do all day."

It appeared his father was a fisherman; his mother was dead, and he had no brothers or sisters. On calm days he went with his father sometimes to fish; in rough weather he sat at home, and mended the broken nets as well as he could; sometimes he joined other children at their play; but the chief feature in his daily life was a half-hour every morning with Father Joseph, who taught him his catechism and prayers and hymns, and moreover had promised to let him serve at the altar when he was old enough. Edith did not make much out of his story, for though she spoke Italian well and easily, she was by no means familiar with Neapolitan provincialisms; but she had been studying the boy's face as he spoke, and when he stopped she said:

"You must come and spend to-morrow morning with me."

"What for?" he asked bluntly; evidently his new acquaintance had not inspired him with any great confidence.

"*What for?*" replied Edith rather sharply; "I'm not going to eat you, child. I want you, that's all; and I will give you some pretty pictures and some bonbons."

"I don't want them," he replied in rather a sulky tone.

"So!" said Edith, "is that the way your friend the priest tells you to answer a lady? He does not teach you politeness, at any rate."

"He teaches me to be good and obedient," replied Leonardo, who, never having heard of "*politeness*," was quite at a loss to understand what duty he was accused of failing in.

"Then *be* obedient, and come when I ask you," said Edith; "come to my house to-morrow at ten;" and she described its situation.

The child gave her a puzzled, frightened look, and then again asked:

"What for?"

"What on earth do you take me for?" exclaimed Edith, provoked beyond measure at the child's pertinacity; "are you afraid of being stolen? I want to draw a picture of you; there, will that satisfy you? will you come now?"

"I will ask Padre Giuseppe, and if he says I may, I will," replied Leonardo.

"Ask a priest if you may have your picture taken!" replied Edith contemptuously. "Well, that is going pretty far," she added mentally: "what tyrants they must be!"

"I must ask if I may come to your house,

signora," he said, "because it is in the town, and I may not go there without leave."

"O, afraid of those pretty eyes getting into mischief! Well, there is some sense in that; but you will be quite safe with me, and I will take you back to your home myself in the afternoon. Will that do for you? won't you promise to come now?"

But Leonardo was proof against both bribery and coaxing. He smiled and looked pleased, but still replied firmly:

"I will come if I may."

That smile touched some chord in Edith's heart.

"You have lost your mother; do you remember her?" she asked, with so sudden a change of manner and softening of tone that it was hardly like the same person who was speaking but a moment before.

"No, signora, she died when I was a little baby," he replied; and a large tear rolled down his cheek: the thought of his mother, the longing to have known her, was his one only sorrow. Once again Edith stooped and kissed his forehead, and as she did so said in a rapid low tone, as if half-ashamed of the sympathy she was expressing:

"So did mine."

Then turning away she took out a card, wrote a few words in pencil on the back of it, and giving it to the child said:

"There, show that to Padre Giuseppe, and tell him I will take good care of you if he will let you come to me to-morrow;" and, without waiting

for any reply, she walked quickly towards the town—quickly, and with one hand pressed tightly on her brow, and a dull heavy beating at her heart which made her breathe with difficulty. What was the matter? What were her thoughts?

They were far, far away, with the mother whom she had never known on earth; for it was the anniversary of her death—the vigil of the Annunciation. “If *she* had lived she would have loved me,” she thought; “and now there is no one, nothing. I would give anything to have even a dog that loved me, that would lie at my feet and lick my hand, and be grateful if I spoke to it. And yet, after all, what matter? Who is worth loving? What is the use of it? What does intellect want with affection? No, no; knowledge is power, and power is strength, and strength is life—the only life worth living for. Who wants to feel? Who wants to love, if they had but strength to tread it down and be independent of it? What a fool I am to wish for what I despise! I should like just to try the experiment, though. I wonder if I could make that child love me;—perhaps I should end by loving it. Well, no matter; I may as well love that as a dog or a horse. Suppose I offer to adopt it and take it to England with me? I daresay the old fisherman would be pleased enough; but that Padre Giuseppe is a great bore; I wish he were at the bottom of the sea.” With which highly charitable desire she ended her train of thought, having reached the door of her lodging.



## CHAPTER II.

For not a soul inhabits this wide earth,  
Inside the Church or out, that is not led  
By some stray blessing or uncertain grace,  
Irregular, and oft miraculous.

F. W. FABER.

Was Edith's home, then, a dreary one? We will turn back and look at it. Sir Charles Sydney was the last descendant of a family which traced its ancestors up to one of the proud Norman barons who came over with Duke William to trample upon the rights and liberties of our good forefathers.

Proud of his ancient lineage, and, perhaps with some excuse, proud of an escutcheon which had never seen a "bar sinister," Sir Charles Sydney lived with almost princely magnificence in his ancestral hall. It was a noble old house, and contained much that would have been invaluable to any deeply religious or highly intellectual mind; but all this was wasted on Sir Charles Sydney. He cared nothing for the ruined chapel where his ancestors, with all their faults (and Norman barons were certainly not over-scrupulous), had been wont to assist daily at the Holy Sacrifice, and commonly spoke of it as "an old Popish hole;" he cared nothing for the magnificent library, stored with many of the most valuable books in the world. What were they to him? he was neither a scholar nor a theolo-

gian; he cared neither for science nor revelation; he did not even care for art, and some of the masterpieces of the glorious old Italian painters hung unnoticed on his walls, except indeed that, knowing their supposed worth, he was proud of possessing them. What were "the wild thought of Tintoret," the refined intellect of Da Vinci, the inspired glory of Raffaele, and, most of all, the pure and spiritual conception of Fra Angelico, "that most holy monk of Fiesole," to a man whose whole interest was centred in his horses and hounds, and whose chief boast was that he possessed the finest hunters and the purest breed of dogs in the kingdom? And yet Sir Charles had qualities which rendered him a popular man in his neighbourhood. The fact of his being rich of course went far in itself to make him so—for mammon-worship is England's idolatry—but he was also what the world commonly calls generous, that is to say, he was hospitable, gave large dinner-parties, and kept open house during the hunting and shooting seasons; moreover, he gave large sums to all the local charities, and never allowed any appeal for money to be made to him in vain. Whatever faults he had, certainly stinginess was not one of them; he was far too proud to be mean. With his own servants and workpeople too he was popular; for he gave them higher wages than anyone else in the county, and always paid them regularly; but he considered this the utmost extent of his duty towards them. What business was it of his whether a man spent his money at the alehouse or took it home to his wife? whether he sent his

children to school or suffered them to grow up with no religion, and worse than heathen morals? whether he went to church or whether he didn't? That was the parson's affair, not his.

Mr. Bruce had once ventured to remonstrate with him about a groom whose disorderly habits gave great scandal in the village; but Sir Charles had only replied very courteously (for he prided himself on being a perfect *gentleman*), "My dear sir, it really is no concern of mine. I am very sorry; the man is too good a servant for me to part with him; I really cannot interfere in these matters. Preach as many sermons as you like against drunkenness or any other vice, but pray don't ask *me* to do it."

Mr. Bruce was no favourite of Sir Charles Sydney's. Stern and uncompromising in character, he had no sympathy with the easy *laissez-faire* temperament of the baronet; and though Sir Charles could not help respecting him as a man of high principle, his manner of carrying out his principles was peculiarly distasteful to him. For instance, Mr. Bruce had established daily service, and the sound of the church-bells broke in unpleasantly upon his breakfast and dinner; it was a great deal "too much of a good thing" to be forcibly reminded twice a day of the existence of God. Then, again, though at Mr. Bruce's request he had removed certain red curtains which surrounded his pew as if it had been a four-post bed, he by no means liked the consequent publicity which prevented him from going comfortably to sleep during the service, and obliged him at all events to hear occasionally

a few plain-spoken truths, by no means either flattering or palatable to him.

Of course, if Sir Charles had merely consulted his own inclination he would have absented himself from church altogether; but that would not have been quite respectable, and Sir Charles Sydney worshipped respectability, and worshipped it with considerable devotion too; for he submitted habitually to much that was exceedingly irksome to him in order to keep up a fair character in the world. A naturally refined taste made everything low or vulgar simply odious to him; but neither irreligion nor self-indulgence are vulgar, and Sir Charles took infinite trouble to keep strictly within the bounds of "respectability" in his conduct. Consequently he went to church every Sunday, and even on Christmas-day and Good Friday, and insisted on his servants doing the same; and sometimes invited the rector to dinner, on which occasions he always talked in a most exemplary manner about the necessity of proper instruction in schools, or abused Catholics (it was about the time of the Emancipation Bill) with a zeal which, to judge from Mr. Bruce's cold politeness in reply, was not particularly gratifying to him.

At length an event happened which threw the whole village of Fernley into excitement—Sir Charles Sydney was married. Not, of course, that this was anything wonderful or unexpected in itself; but his choice of a wife was the very last that could have been imagined. Lady Sydney was neither a fashionable beauty, a person of high rank, nor a modern "Die Vernon," but the

daughter of a plain country gentleman, and, except that she certainly was very beautiful, possessed one only preëminent gift—a holiness and purity of mind that would have made her a saint if she had been a Catholic. Some of Sir Charles's friends shrugged their shoulders, and asked each other if the baronet was "going to pull up, and turn serious." Others laughed, and said, "What a fool the girl was to marry him!" and Mr. Bruce, who had been for some time acquainted with Miss Lyle, was both astonished and grieved that she should have thrown herself wilfully into a life so uncongenial to her. Of course, ill-natured people said she had married for money, for a position in society, for a name; and even her best friends were utterly unable to account for it, for no one supposed or believed what, after all, was the simple truth—that from the very depth of her heart she loved him. *How* this could be who shall say? Our affections are not in our own power; they will not submit to be analysed. Enough that it *was* so. But Mary Lyle's was no blind affection; she knew, better perhaps than she cared to acknowledge even to herself, that her husband was both careless in his life and indifferent, if not actually sceptical, as to his faith; but she made a woman's most common and most fatal mistake: she believed that her own influence over him was strong enough to counteract, and at length to remedy, these faults. She believed that his affection for her was as strong as her own for him. "Why else," she fondly thought, "would he have cared for one so unlike himself in every way?" "Why else" was it? Her

singular grace and beauty had first attracted him; his refined and fastidious taste fully appreciated the difference between natural and artificial grace and elegance. Then it was much more comfortable (to say nothing of more respectable) to be married; to have some one to make his breakfast and tea for him, receive his visitors, sit at the head of his table, enable him to enjoy more of general society than he could do as a bachelor. In short, Sir Charles married out of pure selfishness; and the question of whether or not Mary Lyle would be *happier* as Lady Sydney never once occurred to him. It was not his nature to be cruel or unkind to anything; he never spoke roughly or harshly to her, never thwarted her, never troubled her about anything whatever; gave her always plenty of money, and never asked how she spent it; never opened her letters or asked to see them; and never interfered with her religious opinions or practices. But Lady Sydney learnt only too soon that this was not affection, but indifference; he did not care enough about her to trouble himself the least about anything she thought or did. The wound sank deep into her heart, far too deep for outward show. No word or look or sigh ever betrayed her secret grief, even to her nearest and dearest friends; she knew too well her duty as a wife to suffer the least shadow of blame to rest on her husband through her, and she loved him too well to endure that his coldness to her should be noticed by any. But she had one sharper sorrow still—the pang of self-reproach. She felt, she knew, that she had worshipped the creature more than the Creator,

and, with the humiliation of a crushed heart and an accusing conscience, she bore her punishment meekly, uncomplainingly—nay, for *his* sake, with outward cheerfulness ; but it was gradually wasting away her life. For his sake she spent the winter in a ceaseless round of gaiety at Clare Hall, and the spring in the heartless frivolities of the London season ; and while he admired her exceeding beauty, and led her proudly through crowded halls and assemblies, he knew nothing of the thorns that lay concealed under the wreath of white lilies that bound her brow. For his sake, too, she did what was harder still—met him always with a bright sunny smile and cheerful step. *He* never saw a cloud on her brow or a tear in her eye ; but he little knew what this cost her. He knew nothing of the hours spent in her lonely room or in the cold bare church (which Mr. Bruce would never allow to be closed), where vainly, but with earnest yearning longing, she sought what only the one true Church can give. No, not altogether vainly ; prayer can never be in vain, and it may be that some special grace supplied what was wanting. Surely no soul can be lost for sins of ignorance, or utterly deprived of grace, while earnestly loving and serving her Lord. No shadow of doubt had ever crossed Lady Sydney's mind ; there was only a vague indefinite consciousness of something wanting ; but in her humility she always attributed this to herself, and only grieved that she could not realise the Presence in which she believed.

Mr. Bruce was a real friend, and a great comfort to her ; but, after all, it was merely human

comfort, human sympathy—it did not even profess to be more; for the time had not arrived when Catholic doctrine raised its head boldly among Anglicans, and claimed to be heard, believed, obeyed, by the mere force of its own intrinsic truth.

Mr. Bruce had daily prayers and weekly communions in his church. He taught Baptismal Regeneration and *a* (though not *the*) doctrine of the Real Presence; he taught that holiness was the obedience, and sin the rebellion, of the will; he maintained the duty of fasting on the same authority as that of prayer and almsgiving; he unreservedly used and recommended the sign of the Cross, and prayers for the departed; never spoke of the Blessed Virgin except with a degree of reverence which often procured him hard words from his parishioners; and constantly referred to the intercession of saints and the protection of guardian angels as a powerful assistance in all difficulties or temptations. But he did not as yet teach the Sacrifice of the Altar or the sacrament of penance,—he had not come to that yet. If he had seen those things himself he would have taught them without scruple, for all compromise or reserve with regard to God's truth was utterly hateful to him. If he thought a thing *right* he said it or did it without caring a straw about the consequences, and yet in a very simple childlike manner always, as if the possibility of doing anything else had never occurred to him: so that he seldom offended people, and they took many things quietly from him which they would have resented in anyone else.



## CHAPTER III.

[ Sin can follow where gold cannot ;  
Pictures and books the damps may rot,  
But what hath passed from the soul of mortal—  
Be it word or thought of pride—  
Hath gone with him thro' the dim low portal,  
And waiteth by his side.

F. W. FABER.

It was a bright December morning about a year after their marriage : a small hunting party was assembled at Clare Hall ; and Lady Sydney, throwing a shawl over her head, came out for a moment to admire a new horse which her husband had just mounted for the first time. Perhaps he was pleased at her taking any interest in what he knew was in itself indifferent to her, or perhaps for the moment a spark of real affection was kindled,—at all events as she patted the animal's arching neck and playfully stuck a bough of evergreen between his ears, Sir Charles stooped from his saddle and kissed her brow. The tears started into her eyes, for it was long since she had received so spontaneous a mark of affection ; but, brushing them hastily away, she said gaily, " You have a fine day for your hunt. A merry ride and a safe return to you all." They waved their hats and started, and she returned to the house.

It was a gallant hunt that day, and the stag, after giving his pursuers a somewhat intricate chase through the narrow lanes, struck out into

the open country across the marshy fens, in the direction of Peterborough and Crowland. Sir Charles Sydney urged his noble steed over the broad fens and across the wide ditches; and as they approached the little village of Crowland he was full a quarter of a mile in advance of the rest of the hunt. The stag dashed wildly through the village, to the delight of the boys and terror of the girls who happened to be playing in the street, and, making straight towards the Abbey, sprang over loose stones and broken bases of pillars, finally falling bruised and exhausted on a low fragment of the inner wall.

"Please stop, sir," said a boy, bravely confronting Sir Charles's foaming steed; "the stag is safe enough in the Abbey; your horse can't follow there."

"Get out of my way!" exclaimed the baronet with a blasphemous oath, as, striking his spurs into the animal, he rode furiously on. "Can't follow!" he thought to himself; "what does the rascal mean? We'll soon see about that. So ho, steady!" he exclaimed, suddenly checking his mad career, as the ruined archway, blocked up with large masses of stone, stood close before him; but it was too late. A loose stone rolled away as the horse set its foot upon it; the animal staggered and fell, and Sir Charles was thrown with great violence over its head. A few moments brought the rest of the party to the spot. Sir Charles had struck against a sharp piece of stone, and the blood flowed copiously from a wound in his head; he was perfectly insensible. The horse, as is the wont of those noble animals,

stood apparently regardless of its own pain, though blood streamed from its broken knees, gazing wistfully into its master's face. One gentleman rode off at full speed for a surgeon, another hastily bound up the wounded man's head with a handkerchief, and another was about to lead away the horse.

"Let the poor beast alone, Maynard," said Sir William Grant, an old officer who had joined the hunt that day by that providence which men call accident, for it was not his ordinary custom; "the creature's warm breath may do more to restore him than anything we can do for the present."

Probably he was right, for in a few moments Sir Charles opened his eyes, glared wildly around him, and then in a voice, the agony of which none of those who heard it ever forgot, exclaimed, "*I cannot, I dare not die!*" The effort burst the bandage round his head, and he almost immediately again fainted from loss of blood.

By this time the surgeon had arrived. Without saying a word, he bound up the wound, forced as much as he could of a strong cordial down his patient's throat, and felt for some moments the beatings of his heart; then, turning round, he briefly inquired of the person next him where Sir Charles lived and of whom his family consisted.

"Poor thing, poor thing!" he said compassionately; "will anyone ride on and break it to her?"

Sir William Grant instantly mounted his horse.

"What shall I say?" he asked.

"There is no hope," replied the surgeon; "but don't tell her that; say the injury is very serious, but will probably not affect the brain; that's enough, and it is the only comfort I can give her. Tell her to send for his own physician."

"His own physician!" thought Sir William Grant, as he urged his horse, already tired with the long chase, to its utmost speed; "his confessor, if he had one, would be more to the purpose." Not that he was a Catholic, or anything approaching to it; but having served in the Peninsular war, he had been accustomed to see priests called to attend the wounded and dying soldiers, and the idea naturally occurred to him.

Lady Sydney was roused from her work by the sound of a horse's step in the avenue, and looking out she saw Sir William Grant approaching at an easy trot, for he was anxious to avoid giving her any sudden shock; but the poor animal's state told its own tale; and starting up, Lady Sydney herself opened the hall-door, just as he was in the act of dismounting, and throwing the bridle to a groom, who stared stupidly first at him and then at the horse.

"What shall I do with him, sir?" he asked.

"Anything,—no matter," was the hasty reply, as, turning to Lady Sydney, who was evidently unable to speak, though perfectly calm, he said, "Sir Charles is following me; he will be here presently; but there has been an accident; he has been thrown."

Lady Sydney was as white as the marble pillar

against which she leant; she did not speak a word, but fixed upon Sir William Grant an agonized gaze, which he could not misunderstand.

"No, no; not that," he replied to it; and taking her hand, he led her into the first room he saw.

She submitted passively and mechanically, but in a few moments the stupor passed, and clasping tightly a cross which hung from her girdle, she said in a firm clear voice, "Tell me the truth: I can bear it."

He saw she could bear it; and as gently as possible, but with the natural matter-of-fact honesty of a soldier, he told her everything that had occurred, omitting only the words Sir Charles had spoken, which he felt would only needlessly distress her. "The surgeon does not think the injury extends to the brain," he added: "but he recommended your sending for Sir Charles's own physician."

Lady Sydney looked fixedly at him, as if to read in his countenance that he was not deceiving her; at his last words she rose, rang the bell, and calmly gave the necessary order, only betraying her anxiety by adding to it, "Take the fastest horse in the stable." Then turning to Sir William Grant, she said, "For God's sake tell me plainly; is there any hope of his recovery?"

Poor Sir William Grant was quite taken off his guard; he understood nothing of mental reservations, white lies, or casuistry of any kind; he was only a blunt, plain-spoken soldier, though like most soldiers he carried a tender heart beneath a rough exterior.

"Indeed, I fear not," he replied.

She trembled from head to foot; he thought she was going to faint; but he little knew her real strength. Holding out her hand to him, she said calmly, "Thank you very much for telling me. God bless you for your kindness to-day." As she left the room, she turned back and said, "Your horse is not fit to ride; take any one you like of ours."

Even at that moment she could think of others.

He did not attempt to detain or answer her, though very grateful for her offer, which indeed was almost necessary, for several hours' rest were indispensable before his own horse could recover.

"There now," he said to himself as he went towards the stable, "I have said exactly what I was told not; but hang me if I could help it! The very Prince of Lies would think twice about it before he deceived that woman."

The first moment of a great sorrow is too crushing to be agitating, if indeed anything can be agitating to those whose lives are a perpetual sorrow. Lady Sydney gave every order, and made every preparation for receiving her husband with a calmness which almost alarmed those who witnessed it. But they need not have feared; they would not if they had seen how, when all was done that could be done, she knelt before the crucifix in her little oratory, and let the tears flow freely in *His* sight who alone could comfort her. It was only for a few minutes, and then she heard the carriage-wheels, and, after one short earnest cry for strength, went, as she had

done once before that day, to the hall-door; but this time not alone, for the physician, who had already arrived, was there before her. They carried Sir Charles, who was still insensible, to his bed, and after a short consultation, the surgeon, who had accompanied him in the carriage, left the house.

"Let me be alone with him now," Lady Sydney said, as Dr. Jackson, after doing all that was necessary, sat down to watch by the bedside.

He hesitated, for he feared the consequence of any sudden agitation to his patient; but that earnest imploring gaze was not to be resisted.

"You must allow me to leave the door open into the next room," he said, as he moved away, "that I may hear every sound, and be ready to return at a moment's notice."

She did not reply, but quietly bent her head submissively, and they were left alone. The next half hour was not one to be described in words; they who have known such suspense will understand it. Lady Sydney dreaded some violent paroxysm of madness, but she was spared this trial. The great quantity of blood that Sir Charles had lost had saved him from that. He opened his eyes slowly, vacantly: and gazed with a sort of stupid stare round the room. Then, as if suddenly recollecting himself, he fixed them with an agonised expression on his wife, and said in a voice so low, both from suppressed emotion and from weakness, that she could scarcely hear it, "Mary, will you—can God forgive me?"

A print of the Crucifixion hung opposite the

bed. Lady Sydney pointed to it as she said, "He died for all; He can forgive all."

"Not those who have never prayed to Him," he exclaimed passionately; "not those who have—"

She laid her hand gently on his mouth; as much for herself as for him she dreaded what might follow; and besides, the door was open, and Dr. Jackson in the next room.

"Shall we pray now?" she said; and without waiting for an answer, she knelt down, and in as calm a voice as she could command, said what is ever the first prayer that rises to the lips in any sorrow or suffering—the "Our Father." Sir Charles knew that prayer well; he had learnt it as a child at his mother's knee; he had heard it every Sunday in church; what made it sound so differently now? Large hot tears rolled down his cheeks as she finished it, the first, except as a child, that he had ever been known to shed.

"You want more help than I can give you," she said; "would you like to see Mr. Bruce?"

"Yes, yes; now directly," he replied with some impatience.

She called Dr. Jackson, and left the room to send the necessary message. When she returned he was replacing the bandages round Sir Charles's head, an operation under which he was writhing with considerable pain. Lady Sydney brought some cooling lotion to bathe his temples.

"How soon will he be here?" he asked.

"In less than half an hour, I trust," she said; "and you must try to keep still and rest till then."



"Rest!" he repeated; "rest! Don't talk to me of rest!" and with a violent effort, he attempted to throw himself into a different posture.

Dr. Jackson quietly restrained him.

"Indeed, sir," he said, "you must calm yourself. This agitation greatly increases your illness."

"It matters very little, doctor," he replied, with something of his natural impetuosity of manner, "whether it increases my illness or not." Then turning to his wife, he added, "Mary, don't deceive yourself; I know I have not many hours to live. I feel it—*here*;" and he raised his hand to his head. "I shall never see my child; you must give it a double portion of your love."

He paused; the effort was evidently almost beyond his strength.

"I never loved you as I ought, Mary," he continued; "God knows, I do now; I would now if I could live. Will you believe—can you forgive?" He sank back exhausted.

She bent over him, but to her last hour she never knew whether or not he had heard those words of full trust and forgiveness. She sat watching his now insensible form till Mr. Bruce came, when she met him in the adjoining room. They were still speaking together when Dr. Jackson came in, and spoke a few words in a low tone to Mr. Bruce, who immediately rose; Lady Sydney followed him. He turned back: "I must see him alone," he said; and calmly she bent her head, and returned to her former seat; but the doctor's manner had alarmed her,

and she asked if there were any change, if he were worse. Dr. Jackson dared not tell her the truth; he did not know that, weak and delicate as she was, she had an inward strength which the heaviest cross might indeed bend and crush, but would not break.

"He is exactly as you left him," was his reply. Mr. Bruce came back. Without speaking he took Lady Sydney's hand, led her straight in front of the picture of the Crucifixion, and then said:

"Have you ever thought of His Mother's sorrow during those three hours? Three hours of agony, and then—it was finished; and yet He gave her strength for all." He felt her hand suddenly become stone cold in his own, and he knew she was understanding him. "As He will give you strength now," he added; "all is at rest here now;" and he drew her towards the bed. Mechanically, like a moving statue, she followed him, but the next moment, with a passionate flood of tears, clasped the now lifeless form of her husband. He was thankful for this, and, without attempting to check or console her, knelt down and said in a clear steady voice some prayers for the dead. She appeared totally insensible to everything but her own grief. He went on, repeated several psalms, and at last, fearing the effects of such violent agitation for her, was about to call in Dr. Jackson; but the cessation of his voice roused her as the sound of it had not done; she sprang to the door to intercept him, saying:

"Must you leave me?"

"Surely not if I can comfort you," he replied.

Her power of self-control had returned, and she allowed him calmly to do and say what he would.

Slowly she recovered the shock, but not the sorrow; for it was one which could not be comforted. Nothing that Mr. Bruce could say was of any avail here; perhaps if she had believed in Purgatory she would have found hope, for there would have been the thought of expiation. His penitence at the last *might* have been sincere *might* even have been sufficient for his salvation; but who could assure her of this? The trial was too much: it broke her heart. She lived only to see her child baptized, and to commit it to the care of a maiden aunt of Sir Charles Sydney's, who would be the companion and protector of the little orphan. Miss Brooke was not exactly the person Lady Sydney would have chosen; but there was no one else able to give up her own home-duties to superintend the household of the little heiress of Clare Hall, and she was at least thoroughly trustworthy in all ordinary senses of the word. Lady Sydney could only satisfy herself in other respects with a promise readily given by Mr. Bruce, that he would watch over the poor motherless child as his own, and consider himself wholly responsible for her religious instruction.

And he had been faithful to his promise; it was not his fault that Edith had not responded very warmly to his fatherly affection, and that she had gladly seized the opportunity of her long absence abroad to emancipate herself from his teaching.

Perhaps he would have been less unhappy about her if he had known with what feelings she now looked back upon all this.



## CHAPTER IV.

Ah, well I deem thou shrinkest now  
From urgent rule and severing vow,—  
Time hath a taming hand.

*Lyra Apostolica.*

As Edith entered the room where her aunt sat waiting for her, the latter turned round, and said rather sternly :

“What have you been doing, my love? It is very late, almost night. Really you should not be out alone now; it is not respectable.”

Without making any reply, Edith turned away, ostensibly to take off her bonnet, but really to hide a contemptuous curl of her lip. Throwing her cloak carelessly over the back of a chair, she went to the table, and with as much politeness as she could at the moment command, said :

“I am sorry to have kept your tea waiting, but I am quite ready now. Shall I pour it out?”

“If you please; but I wish you would tell me what you have been doing all this time,” replied Miss Brooke.

“Nothing particular,” was the answer, in a tone which implied clearly, even to Miss Brooke’s

somewhat obtuse perceptions, "that is all I mean to tell you, and you will get no more by asking."

Miss Brooke felt annoyed and uncomfortable, but she was silenced; for she knew well from experience that it was perfectly useless (at all events for *her*) to attempt to control Edith, so she quietly resigned herself to her tea.

This same tea was a daily source of amusement to their Neapolitan servant, and of consequent annoyance to Edith, who, like all very sensitive people, was keenly alive to the ridiculous, and by no means enjoyed the jokes made at their expense on the folly of carrying large canisters of tea about with them. Edith had often remonstrated with her aunt on the subject, but to no purpose; and once, when she had endeavoured to make a practical application of the wise advice to "do at Rome as the Romans do," she was met with the indignant reply that at that rate it would be necessary to "turn Papist" there. "Well, after all," Edith answered in a careless tone, "I should have no great objection. One might do worse—turn Mahometan, for instance." To which Miss Brooke had made the somewhat Hibernian reply, that she believed Mahometans were much better Christians than Papists.

The tea was not a very sociable meal that evening; both ladies had their own reasons (they were very different ones) for preferring silence to conversation; but afterwards, as they sat at their work, Miss Brooke said:

"If we leave Naples this week, we shall have time for a day or two in Rome on our way home."

"*A day or two in Rome!*" exclaimed Edith in a tone of supreme contempt.

"Yes, why not? what's the matter?" asked Miss Brooke, by no means comprehending her niece's manner.

"Nothing whatever," replied Edith coldly, "except that you speak of Rome as if it were nothing more than London or York."

"And what more is it?" asked Miss Brooke; "all three are only large cities; and as for the antiquities, I really don't see why people care for them."

This was too much to be even worth contempt, and Edith merely replied:

"Well, I suppose we shall see when we get there."

Little Leonardo was true to his promise. At ten the next morning he came, being left at the door by Padre Giuseppe himself; a circumstance, however, which Edith was not at the time aware of.

"Come, I am glad the old priest is not such a dragon, after all," said Edith, laughing, as she welcomed him with a kiss.

The child drew back.

"He is *not* old; and what is a dragon?" he said sulkily.

"You are very touchy, you queer little mortal," Edith replied. "Do you suppose people are the worse for being old? And as to a dragon—well, as I said, your friend was not one, no matter what it is."

The child submitted with perfect good temper to having his likeness taken, though it involved

what is generally the greatest possible penance to children (and to some other people too), viz., the necessity of sitting still for a considerable time. Edith, however, was not over exacting in this respect. She allowed him a picture-book, and a cup and ball, to amuse himself with during the time. The latter plaything delighted him extremely, and enabled her to watch the play of his countenance and the expression of his eyes, which of course was her object in giving it to him.

After his dinner she offered, as she had before promised, to take him home. As they passed the church of the Gesù, he entreated her to go in; they would just be giving Benediction, he said. Edith had no objection. Music was always soothing to her; and she troubled herself too little about her conscience to have any scruples on that score; she had too little religion of any kind to care what outward form thereof she joined in.

They were just beginning the "O Salutaris;" and Edith, merely to escape observation, knelt down like the rest. She did not at first attend much to what was going on; but soon the Litany began, and the tune, which was a very touching one, attracted her ear. It was sung in triplets, and alternately from side to side of the choir, like the swinging of a mighty censer. For a time Edith gave herself up to the mere sensual enjoyment, the sort of spell which very perfect music always lays on the hearts of those who understand and love it, and which St. Augustine so touchingly describes in his Confessions; but the

voices were very clear, and presently the words rang out distinctly :

Refugium peccatorum,	} <i>Ora pro nobis.</i>
Consolatrix afflictorum,	
Auxilium Christianorum,	

Edith, as far as the mere literal meaning of the words went, understood all the services of the Catholic Church perfectly. She had, however, either never heard, or never noticed, this Litany before, and gave a sudden start as the "*Ora pro nobis*" followed this triplet.

"If it were only true!" passed through her mind; "and they believe it, these people all believe it! Are they all fools? or am I an infidel? One thing is very certain, I believe nothing; and never shall till I find some authority I can submit to—which does not exist, however," was her conclusion, and apparently no very satisfactory one to her, for she pressed her hand tightly upon her brow, as if in pain.

Tantum ergo Sacramentum  
Veneremur cernui.

Involuntarily, from a mere impulse of overwrought feeling, Edith bowed her head with those around her, but with a sudden start raised it again. All unreality, all sham, was utterly abhorrent to her. No one more largely possessed the one redeeming point of an intensely proud nature—perfect truthfulness.

"What have I done? what was I adoring?" she asked herself, in great distress at what seemed to her an act of something worse than



mere weakness, and which she was determined to atone for by most resolutely abstaining from any similar mark of reverence when the benediction was actually given. She was still sitting in the church when a priest came in, and kneeling close to her, began saying his office. With an instinctive feeling of delicacy Edith moved away; she had no idea of what is meant by "recollection;" she thought it must be both distracting and annoying to anyone to say his prayers in a public church at all; and it was from a real wish to relieve him of a discomfort, that she retreated, as she thought, against the wall, where she stood looking at different things that attracted her notice; the priest, however, was her chief object of observation. It struck her as unusual that he should recite his office kneeling, and the evident *reality* of his devotion attracted her. She watched him as if he had been a picture or a statue, and was consequently somewhat startled when he proved himself to be neither, by quietly walking straight up to her, and asking in Italian if she were waiting for a priest. Not having the least idea what he meant, she took it for an impertinence; and was on the point of giving him a very haughty reply, when she perceived, for the first time, that she was leaning against a confessional, and instantly comprehended both his mistake and her own. Though not naturally either shy or nervous, the novelty of the situation embarrassed her, and she stumbled a little over her words, as she said, "I beg your pardon—I did not see." Then, as if that would in itself of necessity explain everything, she added, "I am English."

The priest suddenly looked up at her with an expression of such keen interest that she fully expected to hear him say, "And I too am English;" but from whatever cause his emotion proceeded, it was instantly subdued, and he hurriedly made a brief apology, still in Italian, for his mistake, and was turning away, when, as if from some feeling he could not altogether control, he looked back and said earnestly: "May God bless you, and teach you the true faith."

Edith was spared the necessity of making any reply, for before she had even time to open her lips, he was half way down the church.

"What a fool I was to stand here!" was her first thought; her second was, that the sooner she got away the better; and beckoning Leonardo, who had been waiting for her, she walked rapidly out of the church. Several children were congregated round the door, and amongst them stood the priest who had spoken to her. She felt annoyed and irritated; and quite forgetting that of course they could not understand English, impatiently desired the child nearest her to get out of the way and let her pass. The priest smiled, spoke to the children in Italian, who thereupon immediately made way for her, and raising his hat, bowed slightly but very courteously.

"That is Padre Giuseppe," said Leonardo.

Edith turned round and looked him full in the face for a moment; certainly the child was right, he was "not old," and looked exceedingly unlike a dragon. It was not a countenance easily described, except by the single word *intensity*. He

was very dark, his large black eyes were very clear and calm, and yet there was something in them which, as plainly as the lines on his brow, told of storms that had been passed through; as for his age, it certainly could not have been more than forty; he reminded Edith strongly of something or some one she had seen before, but she could not remember where, till after some minutes it occurred to her that it was Ary Scheffer's picture of St. Augustine.

"He is very kind to children, he loves them," she said, speaking her own thoughts rather than addressing the child.

"Oh yes, so much!" he replied; "he plays with us, and tells us such pretty stories; and sometimes he cuts out little horses and dogs in paper for us. He has such a beautiful picture of a horse in his room!"

"Ah, yes!" said Edith, as if it seemed perfectly natural to her that a Jesuit priest should like dogs and horses; "what sort of horse is it?"

Leonardo was puzzled; a horse was a horse to him, and "nothing more," and he could only reply: "It is brown."

Edith laughed, but asked no more questions; and by this time they had reached their destination.

It was still daylight; and Edith, who felt in no mood just then for her aunt's company, or anyone else's, went down to the shore, and seating herself on the beach employed herself in listlessly throwing stones into the sea, and watching the eddying circles widening on the water. Shall

we look into her thoughts? They were somewhat disjointed, as is commonly the case in an undisciplined mind; but so far as they can be intelligibly expressed, were pretty much as follows: "The true faith! ay, or *any* faith,—*anything* that I could grasp, clutch, cling to, hold on by, be it true or false. Those old Egyptians with their cats and crocodiles, *they* had faith; Mahometans have faith; Catholics have faith, or *say* they have. Is that all? Is it real? If I only could believe *something*, I don't care what! But how can I? There is no authority short of revelation that I can submit to: there is no revelation, I suppose, but the Bible, and that tells me nothing, worse than nothing; every religion on the face of the earth that calls itself Christian appeals to it, claims its authority; there can be but one truth, if truth has any existence at all. Has God cursed the world with a universal darkness? What did that priest say? 'May God bless you, and teach you the true faith!' What did he mean? He spoke as if he meant it, as if he cared about it; bah! it was only a way of speaking. What. *could* he care? what can it matter to *him* whether I am Jew, Turk, infidel, or heretic? And besides, *how*? Does God teach anyone Himself the true faith? if He did, one might believe it: but where? how? He never speaks now as He did to the old prophets. Has He been silent, utterly silent ever since?—since when? well, I suppose since the Day of Pentecost. No, I suppose He spoke to St. John in Patmos; that must have been the last time. And yet these Catholics have some theory about their religion being

taught by revelation: I wonder what it is! I never felt inclined to ask anyone before; but suppose I do? Suppose I go back to the church and ask Padre Giuseppe on what authority he believes his religion? That is the real point; it is no use to ask stupid questions about the meaning of this, that, and the other; I can't waste time that way. The only common-sense question would be the old one that the Jews asked—'By what authority doest thou these things?' What would he say? In the first place, he would think me extremely rude; I don't care about that. In the next place, he would think me a fool; well, his opinion is nothing to me, so I don't care about that. Then I suppose he would refer me to the decrees of all the General Councils, from Jerusalem to Trent; that is rather too much of a good thing; besides, I can read them for myself. Or perhaps he would tell me point blank that the Church of Rome is infallible; and of course, if so, there's an end of the matter: but there is no proof for the claim, and I will believe nothing that I cannot prove. He may prove it to his own satisfaction, but he cannot to mine, so what is the use?" With which highly satisfactory conclusion she sprang up quickly and walked home at a furious pace, as she did always when much excited.

They were to start the next day for Rome, so the evening was chiefly occupied in packing. At last, thoroughly tired, but by no means inclined to sleep, Edith threw herself without undressing upon a couch at the foot of her bed, and drawing a little table close to her, lighted a small lamp,

and took up a volume of "Childe Harold." She half read, half dreamed over Lord Byron's glowing description of Rome; but her quietness was only external, and at last, flinging the book violently from her (quite regardless of its elegant binding), she exclaimed, "This won't do!" and paced rapidly up and down the room for some minutes. It was all no use; the few words spoken to her by the Jesuit priest had opened too deep a wound to be healed by any such means. Edith was very genuine; she never deceived herself, never blinded herself to any difficulty; she always looked it fairly in the face, and grappled with it hand to hand: but how was she to do so now? It was so vague, so shadowy, how was she to take hold of it? What was *faith* to one who had drunk deeply the poison of French infidelity and German rationalism; who had submitted her intellect to the fascinations of an avowed defiance of all authority; whose favourite book was Goethe's "Faust," and who, if she did not actually *join* him in laughing at "some foolish women who believed in the immortality of the soul," at all events did her best to destroy the better sense which kept her from such incredulity? Her religion had been the worship of human intellect—"pure intellect," as it is so falsely called; and those few words had shattered her idol and thrown it from its pedestal, by simply forcing her to ask herself candidly, "*What* do I believe? and *why*?" If human intellect was supreme, why submit her own to that of another? Or, at all events, by what rule should she decide *whose* teaching she would accept? Why should one person be more

right than another, if they were equals in intellectual power? St. Paul was intellectual, St. Augustine was intellectual, St. Thomas Aquinas was intellectual—nay more, St. Ignatius Loyola was intellectual; for even as Edith looked upon it, as a mere human institution, the Order of Jesuits was the most wonderful in the world, and the "Spiritual Exercises," which she had read for mere intellectual gratification, were undoubtedly the work of a great mind. After all, had not these men as good a *chance* of being right as Voltaire or Goethe?

"Yes, *as good*, but not a *better* chance," she thought. "Does it, then, really come to this, that I must choose for myself who is *most likely* to be right, and then submit blindly to him? That is sheer slavery! *I will not* do it. If religion, after all, is a mere alternative of probabilities, I will have nothing to do with it; better believe nothing than have no ground for one's belief; that would be the greatest folly of all. I wonder what Mr. Bruce thinks about it?" This was quite an after-thought, and only came after a long pause. "I should like just to know, but why should I? Whatever he thinks, it will only be his own opinion, and what is that to me?"

The clock struck three. Edith started up; they were to leave Naples at four, and there were still several things not packed up. Her maid came in to help her.

"Good gracious, Miss Sydney!" she exclaimed; "have you never been in bed all night? you will be tired to death!"

"Mind your own affairs, and not mine, if you

please, Annette," replied Edith, sharply; a rebuke which Annette received more meekly than such persons generally do; but she was sincerely attached to her mistress.

---

## CHAPTER V.

While stands the Coliseum, Rome shall stand;  
When falls the Coliseum, Rome shall fall;  
And when Rome falls, the world.

*Childe Harold.*

FOR modern Rome Edith cared very little; for Rome ecclesiastical, nothing; but for Rome imperial, for "the city of the Cæsars," she felt all the enthusiasm which only Rome can inspire. Standing on the brow of the Capitoline Hill, she looked down upon the Eternal City; but it was heathen not Christian Rome that her mind's eye gazed upon, and the scene that presented itself there was little in accordance with that actually before her. She had a powerful imagination, and it was all vividly before her; the scene of that memorable "Ides of March," the procession through the crowded streets, the shouts of the people, the suppressed passions of the rival parties who greeted Brutus and Marc Antony, the scornful boast to the astrologer, and his ominous reply—the gathering in the senate-house, the confusion, the deadly blow, the calmly reproachful, "*Et tu, Brute!*" and the burst of generous



indignation from Marc Antony—it was all before her, as a living reality, a far more *conscious* reality than the slow procession that presently passed before her bodily eyes, carrying the Blessed Sacrament to some sick person; she *saw* it though, and started, as at some disagreeable disenchantment from a pleasant dream, and turning away with a kind of sneer, went back to her hotel.

In the sitting-room she found her aunt and a gentleman, who was a perfect stranger to her, and whom Miss Brooke introduced as “Captain Maynard, an old friend of your father’s.” Edith bowed stiffly, and under the excuse of changing her walking-dress, left the room; she always hated strangers, and was besides very apt to take strong sudden dislikes to people, as is often the case with persons of warm feeling or temper. In the present instance her first thought, as she shut the door, was, “What a nuisance!” Captain Maynard was still there when she returned; and taking her embroidery frame, she seated herself with it in the window, with her back as nearly turned to him as was possible with ordinary politeness.

But he had no mind to be treated after this fashion, and drawing his chair towards her, asked her what most interested her in Rome,—the statues, or the pictures, or the churches?

“I have seen none of them yet,” replied Edith very coldly.

“Seen none of them!” he exclaimed; “and your aunt tells me you have been out all the morning; why, my dear Miss Sydney—”

Edith drew herself up haughtily, but he took no notice.

"I beg your pardon, but may I ask what *have* you seen?"

"All that I cared to see," she replied; "Cæsar's Rome."

"O," he continued, "then you are an antiquarian, or a geologist perhaps; did you find any curious relics—a rough copy of Marc Antony's speech, or one of Titus's chariot-wheels?"

Edith actually trembled all over with passion, but she was far too proud to *show* anger, and quietly taking a slip of paper from her pocket, wrote something which she handed to Captain Maynard, saying, "I found these words scratched on a broken pillar in the Forum: they are Latin; will you have the kindness to translate them to me?"

She spoke in the coldest, most matter-of-fact tone possible.

He took the paper, looked at it, frowned, bit his lip, but said nothing. The words written on it were those noble ones of Horace:

Si fractus illabatur orbis, Impavidum ferient ruinae.

"Is it very hard to translate?" asked Edith. She had touched a weak point; he was a bad scholar, and proportionately anxious to be *thought* a good one; and he immediately replied:

"O no, not the least; it will not bear a very literal translation; but the meaning is, 'that if the world comes to an end, the ruins will crush us.'"

Edith turned upon him a sudden glance of the most unmitigated contempt; then, with a keen irony, which he did not the least detect, she said with a courteous inclination of her head: "Thank you, Captain Maynard; you have quite satisfied my curiosity."

He did not, however, feel quite comfortable; it never for a moment occurred to him that Edith was purposely making game of him, or that she understood a word of Latin herself; a schoolboy might have tried to play off such a trick upon him, but that a lady should do so was quite beyond the range either of his experience or imagination; still he felt a disagreeable consciousness that he was somehow not making himself appear to advantage; and changing the subject of conversation, he asked abruptly: "Is Mr. Bruce still rector of Fernley?"

"I believe so," was the reply.

"Is he married yet?"

"No," replied Edith bluntly; and without looking up from her work.

"H'm! a great mistake that; don't you think so, Miss Sydney?"

"Mr. Bruce is not given to making mistakes," she replied as bluntly as before, and still without looking up.

"Mr. Bruce is very happy in having so warm an admirer," said Captain Maynard, smiling; "you think him perfection, I suppose?"

"No, I do not," she answered decisively, and with considerable asperity of tone.

Captain Maynard made a peculiar movement of his lips, as nearly approaching to a whistle

as he could venture upon in the presence of ladies, as he said, "Well, I am glad of that, for, after all, though Bruce is a very good fellow, he is a very great fool."

Edith did look up this time, and for a moment her eyes flashed with indignation, but only for a moment, and she said very coldly: "Mr. Bruce was my mother's most valued friend; and for her sake I must beg you to speak of him respectfully."

"So," thought he; "a very pretty dodge that!" but even his effrontery could make no other reply than a civil apology for his former remark. He had not, however, either the good taste or good feeling to change the subject; evidently it had an interest of some kind for him; for, relinquishing Edith as hopeless, he turned to Miss Brooke and asked: "Is Bruce a Puseyite?"

"I really don't know," she said; "I never trouble myself about those sort of things; he is very—" but at this moment catching Edith's eye fixed upon her with an expression which she did not care to provoke farther, she stopped suddenly.

"Well, very *what*?" pursued Captain Maynard sternly, as if he had been questioning a witness at a court-martial.

"Very religious," replied poor Miss Brooke, hoping she had hit upon a most inoffensive adjective, though it certainly was not the word she had originally intended to use.

"Of course, of course," he said, "that's his profession; but I mean does he still keep up daily service, and fasts, and festivals, and preaching in his surplice, and all that sort of thing?"

Not having any very clear notion of what was meant by "all that sort of thing," Miss Brooke very wisely kept to facts, and said: "He has daily service, and a sermon on Saints' days, and always preaches in his surplice."

"Have you any objection, Captain Maynard?" Edith broke in coldly and stiffly.

"Objection? O no, of course not; everybody has a right to do as he pleases; but I can't for the life of me see the use of it. I wonder if it makes him happy?"

There was something in the tone of the last few words that made Edith involuntarily start, but she instantly repressed any outward sign of feeling, as she asked with all her former stiffness: "Does his happiness interest you?"

Captain Maynard was far too much a man of the world to show annoyance, even if he felt it, at the question; but a keen observer might perhaps have suspected some *arrière-pensée* concealed under the lightly-spoken reply: "Not particularly; I only wondered what special charm there is in a surplice, that it has been clung to almost as chivalrously as the regimental colours in a defeat: one would think that something more than a mere party badge was in danger."

"Then you would like to see clergymen read prayers in their coats like Methodist parsons, I suppose?" said Edith.

"I think the cowl does not make the monk," was the not very intelligible reply; and with an evident anxiety to change the subject, he turned to Miss Brooke, and asked if he might have the pleasure of escorting them anywhere the next

day—"You will wish to see the pictures in the Vatican, of course," he said; "that will take some time; and you ought to visit some of the most celebrated churches—St. Peter's, St. John Lateran, Santa Maria Maggiore; by the way, I fancy the Gesù is worth seeing, but this is a bad time, everything in *en devil*, you know, in Lent; you must stay for Holy Week and Easter if you want to see how Rome can throw dust into the eyes of us poor Protestants."

Edith was certainly in a perverse mood that day; ordinarily such words would only have amused her; but there was something about Captain Maynard which involuntarily excited her organ of combativeness, and she said rather sharply:

"It seems to me she does her best to disperse the dust we throw into them ourselves."

"Eh! what? are you a Catholic?" exclaimed he, as it suddenly struck him that this would account for her former strangeness of manner, though on what conceivable principle it would have been difficult to say.

Edith smiled, a bitter sarcastic smile, and replied in a tone of offended dignity,

"I am not disposed to make a confession of faith just now; you must excuse me, if you please."

Miss Brooke looked round at her in mute astonishment, but perceived that she was in no mood to be interfered with. Edith, however, saw that her aunt was really distressed; and as it was not her nature to

—blend her pleasure or her pride  
With sorrow of the meanest thing that lives

she went up to her, laid her hand affectionately on her shoulder, and said :

"Now don't be foolish ; you know I am no more a Catholic than you are."

This was said too low for Captain Maynard to hear, and then turning to him she said :

"Whereabouts is the Church of the Gesù ?"

He told her, but could not forbear adding :

"Have you a particular wish to visit it ? I shall be happy to escort you there any time you may wish to-morrow."

"No, thank you," was the very decided reply.

Captain Maynard soon took his leave, after arranging to come the next day and go with them to the Vatican ; after which Miss Brooke stipulated for a drive on the Corso, "to see a little of the world."

A slight expression of disdain suddenly shading Edith's countenance did not escape the Captain.

"And you too, I suppose," he said, "would like to see a little of the world ?" he spoke maliciously, intending to entrap her into another sneer ; but she was "armed at all points," and signally defeated him by saying with perfect frankness :

"I should like to see a great deal of the world."

"Indeed !" he replied with some surprise ; "I should have thought you despised it."

Edith merely laughed, and he took his departure ; more than ever baffled by her, and more that ever cross at being so baffled by a mere child, as he considered her.

"Really, my love, you were very rude to poor Captain Maynard," said Miss Brooke, rather timidly.

Edith was perfectly aware that this was true, and moreover, now that the cause of irritation was removed, felt a good deal ashamed of her failure in that courtesy said to be the heirloom of all noble English families. Hers was not a nature to shrink from truth, however disagreeable might be the form in which it presented itself; and with her characteristic straightforwardness she replied bluntly:

"Yes, I was."

But though she could acknowledge a fault bravely, she could not endure humiliation; and no expression either of regret or apology followed this brief but candid admission.

Encouraged by this apparent meekness, Miss Brooke went on to say:

"You know you are no longer a child now, and such caprices are very unbecoming and unladylike in a person of your age and position in society."

"Thank you, I understand," replied Edith haughtily; "but as I occupy at present no position in society, it is a little too soon to anticipate the obligations it may impose upon me. When I find myself at Clare Hall again, you will not, I hope, have reason to find fault with either the hospitality or the courtesy shown by its mistress: meanwhile, as long as I can be free I will."

Having made this somewhat singular statement of her present and future intentions, she



lighted her candle, saying that she was tired and should go to bed, as they probably had a fatiguing day in prospect.

Miss Brooke remarked that Captain Maynard would make an excellent cicerone, as he had been a great deal in Rome, and "knew all the pictures by heart." "He will be able to tell us the meaning of them all," she added.

"I am glad you will have so talented an expositor," replied Edith with a sarcasm of tone which did not altogether escape her aunt's observation.

"You consider yourself independent of his help then, I suppose?" she said.

"No, not if he is a trustworthy walking catalogue," was the reply; "but I certainly generally prefer making my own observations to listening to other people's."

The good-night which followed this little passage of arms was more affectionate than might have been supposed; for Edith and her aunt really loved each other, though the former was as unintelligible to the latter as Dante's *Inferno* would be to a Yorkshire farmer.

## CHAPTER VI.

Heaven must be *won*, not *dreamed*, thy task is set ;  
Peace was not made for earth, nor rest for thee.

*Lyra Apostolica.*

BEFORE six the next morning Edith was up and on her way to the church of the Gesù, intending to be in her room again before her maid should come to call her. We cannot undertake to explain very clearly what was her motive for this expedition, for she had in vain attempted to do so to herself. It was one of those unaccountable impulses which sometimes seize upon us so strongly, and which, in a nature like Edith's, would suffer no control.

Several Masses were being said, and, amongst others, one at our Lady's altar. Edith crouched down in a secluded corner near the latter. The priest was reading the Collects; his musical voice and soft Roman pronunciation entranced Edith's ear; she was very fastidious in these matters, and what she now listened to was an enjoyment to her which a less sensitive nature would have been wholly incapable of appreciating. It was a festival, and the Credo was said; the words seemed to thrill through her as they never had done before; she knew that this creed was the same as she too professed to believe, and for the first time in her life she fully realised—not that she *did* believe it, but that she did *not*—that as often as she had repeated it, she had been

guilty of a solemn mockery. A thick mist of self-deceit was swept ruthlessly from before her eyes as those solemn words were rapidly spoken; a mask, a disguise fell off from her soul; she saw herself at that moment in her true light, isolated from the whole Christian world, excommunicated, an infidel. It was a sudden shock, she had never so realised it before; but it was not in her nature to shrink before any revelation of truth; she met it boldly, face to face, looked at it steadily, grasped it, accepted it. She did not say to herself, as many would have done, "No, no, it is too shocking, too horrible, it cannot be, I cannot bear it;" she crossed her hands quietly over her breast, bowed her head with the resignation of utter desolateness, and said to herself, "I am not a Christian; I have no faith; I never shall have: *be it so.*"

"*Dominus vobiscum!*" fell on her ear as if in mocking reply to her thoughts. She raised her eyes for a moment involuntarily, and gave a sudden start. There was no mistaking that countenance for any who had seen it once, and it was only by a strong effort of self-control that she restrained herself from exclaiming aloud,

"Padre Giuseppe!"

A wild chaos of imaginations rushed through her mind, all manner of strange tales of Jesuit plots and contrivances. Had Padre Giuseppe followed her to Rome to convert her by some ingenious *coup de main*? some pious fraud?

"I will soon put that to the proof," she thought; "I will give him the opportunity, and see if he cares to take it."

Accordingly she remained in the church after the Mass was over, and as near as possible to the sacristy door, rightly supposing that he would return to make his thanksgiving. She looked up as he passed. He paused a moment, evidently thinking she wished to speak to him ; but, as she did not, recognising her at once, and knowing she was a Protestant, he passed on without noticing her further.

"What a fool I am !" was Edith's mental exclamation, as it occurred to her that in the first place it was utterly impossible Padre Giuseppe could have known that she had left Naples at all ; and, in the next, that nothing was more natural than that he should have business of his own in Rome ; or that, being there, he should say Mass in the church belonging to his order.

She accomplished her purpose of returning to her room before her absence had been discovered, and was not sorry to find that there was still an hour before she need make her appearance at the breakfast-table. She lay down on the bed, and remained perfectly motionless, and, though fully awake, in a kind of mental stupor, till the loud striking of a clock warned her that it was time to prepare for joining her aunt at their morning meal.

Miss Brooke was full of their intended sight-seeing, and, luckily for Edith, talked too much herself to leave much opportunity for anyone else to do so.

Soon after breakfast Captain Maynard came, according to appointment, to escort them to the Vatican.

"Are you ready, Miss Sydney?" he said, "or are you bent upon exploring antiquities instead of accompanying us to see more modern works of art?"

Edith was in no mood for jesting; moreover, though she had no idea of making any apology for her rudeness the day before, she was not unwilling to make amends for it by a more courteous behaviour now. She replied with a smile wholly free from sarcasm:

"Indeed, there are few things I have a greater wish to see than the masterpieces of Raffaele and Michael Angelo; I am afraid you will find me rather a troublesome person to escort there, for I shall not be satisfied with a hasty glance at them."

No less pleased than surprised at the change in her manner, he replied, very courteously:

"My time is altogether at your service, pray employ it to any extent you like. I should be very sorry to hurry you."

Everything in Rome has been too often and too well described for any detailed account to be necessary here. Edith almost forgot all other thoughts in the intense enjoyment afforded her by the glorious paintings which her artist's eye enabled her thoroughly to appreciate. And now for the third time, since entering the gallery, she stood before the last work of the greatest painter the world had till then ever seen—Raffaele's Transfiguration.

But it was rather with the man than the picture that her thoughts were occupied. She thought of his early life; of the deeply religious spirit which had conceived those Madonnas, in

whose heavenly expression "the joy of the accomplished promise and the sorrow of the sword-pierced heart are blended in one gaze of ineffable love;" and that inspired St. Catherine with the lips parted in the resting from her pain. She thought how a darker period had followed: base earthly passions, deadening, till they had well nigh quenched, the pure glow of that heavenly light; that noble imagination stooping to the senseless symbols of a vile paganism. while, as it has been truly said, "when Raffaele forsook God, God forsook him." And then a third period, brief, unfulfilled, but yet casting a pale reflection of the early glow, over the last days of Rome's most gifted artist, and embodied in that last work of his hands, the unfinished Transfiguration.

Edith was too much taken up with her own thoughts to look round, but she could not help listening as she heard the following words spoken in English, close behind her.

"This is perfect; surely he must have been satisfied *then*; he must have attained the highest point of his ambition, what could he do more? what more remained to him?"

"*To die*," was the brief and solemnly spoken answer of the person to whom the foregoing question had been addressed.

Edith turned quickly round, a crowd had closed in behind her, it was impossible to distinguish who had been the speakers; no one that she saw *looked* likely to have made the remarks she had overheard; two priests who were moving away and another gentleman with them

had their backs turned to her, but they surely were Italians, she thought, and no foreigner could have spoken with so true an accent.

She looked round now for the others of her party; they were not far off; she went up to Captain Maynard and said in a subdued tone, "I have taxed your patience too long already; shall we go now?"

He and Miss Brooke had both been heartily tired of the pictures for a long time, and were only too happy to exchange the stately halls of the Vatican for a drive on the gay Corso.

This Edith endured, as a necessary evil—as the price she was to pay for the rich intellectual feast of the morning.

Captain Maynard endeavoured to draw her into conversation. "I think," he said, "I met some relations of yours three years ago in France, the Lyles."

He certainly was not happy in his choice of subjects; Mr. Lyle was Edith's uncle, but having quarrelled with his sister for marrying "that scamp," as he always designated Sir Charles Sydney, he had never taken any notice of Edith, though he was her legal guardian, and the only one now living. His treatment of her mother Edith had resented with the whole force of her passionate nature, and if there was any being in the world she perfectly hated it was George Lyle, though she had never seen him.

"Mr. Lyle is my uncle, but we have never met, and I am wholly unacquainted with his family," she replied coldly.

"Indeed!" he continued; "then I can assure

you their acquaintance is worth making; your cousin, Miss Lyle, is a most striking person, and as beautiful as—hem, I was going to say Venus, but that's not good enough for her. She is like one of Raffaele's Madonnas, so still, so gentle—" he would probably have said more, but Miss Brooke interrupted him with,

"Miss Lyle must be very much changed then; when I knew her about five years ago she was the most high-spirited girl and the greatest flirt in London."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Captain Maynard, "Miss Lyle is no more like what you describe than an antelope is like a racehorse; she was out of health, I was told when I saw her, but that does not change a person's nature, and I am convinced she could no more be guilty of flirting than, than—" he seemed at a loss for a comparison, but at last concluded "than Miss Sydney of stealing."

"I feel highly honoured by your opinion of my honesty," returned Edith; "especially as it implies so strong a conviction of my cousin's innocence; but I am afraid my aunt is more likely to be the best judge, as she has seen much more of her than you can have done."

"Miss Lyle was revelling in all the gaieties of a London season, when I knew her," said Miss Brooke, "and certainly did her best to enjoy them to the utmost; but her chief pleasure was in the private theatricals given by Lord Burleigh. She was a perfect actress, and had a voice almost equal to Jenny Lind's; indeed I preferred her to Jenny Lind in many of her characters.



She is a most delightful person; I was very fond of her."

"A perfect actress! A voice like Jenny Lind!" exclaimed Captain Maynard in astonishment; "very extraordinary!—she looked as demure as a tame rabbit when I saw her, and as for flirting and private theatricals, I should have thought, from a few words I heard her say about the opera, that she had a religious horror of both. Ah! I remember now," he continued, "there had been some trouble—an unhappy love affair, I suppose, perhaps that had sobered her down—the grapes were sour."

A look of extreme disgust from Edith was the only return this somewhat ungentlemanly speech met with; but her mental comment thereon was, "What a fool this Agnes Lyle must be; how I despise her!"

Miss Brooke did not seem inclined to continue the conversation, and a rather awkward pause ensued, soon broken, however, by Edith, who said,

"You will stay and dine with us this evening, I hope, Captain Maynard; we have scarcely had time yet to thank you for all your good offices to-day."

He accepted, with a polite speech about the pleasure of serving them, and they soon after arrived at their hotel. Edith actually condescended to consider what Miss Brooke had called her "position in society" so far as to behave with studied politeness the whole evening, and to refrain from any repetition of the snubbing process she had indulged in the day before; but she

chafed and fretted under the self-imposed restraint, and the moment Captain Maynard had left them, fairly broke loose from it.

"Where on earth did you become acquainted with that odious man?" she asked her aunt, with a most undisguised expression of repugnance.

"My dear Edith," Miss Brooke said beseechingly, "you really must learn to moderate your language; Captain Maynard may not be to your taste, but he is an excellent man, and, as I told you, an old friend of your father's. I have met him frequently at Clare Hall, before you were born."

"Ah! yes, I forgot; I beg your pardon," she replied, slowly and thoughtfully; then added with a sort of fierce energy, "then he knew Mr. Bruce: how *dared* he insult him?"

"Insult him! what do you mean?" asked Miss Brooke; "and besides, what makes you care so much about Mr. Bruce? it is unbecoming, unfeminine, and moreover," she added, "it is absurd."

"Miss Brooke," said Edith, drawing herself up haughtily, and speaking in a stiff measured tone, "I mean this—I have the deepest reverence for everything connected with my mother's memory; Mr. Bruce was her most intimate friend, and therefore I am certain he was worthy of her regard, certain that he *deserves* the respect of all who know him. I respect him for her sake, not for his own."

Miss Brooke could not help laughing at this decidedly left-handed compliment; but she replied in a tone of some displeasure.

"My dear Edith, you are talking nonsense; to respect one person for the sake of another is downright folly."

"Very likely," was the cool answer; "and as we have had quite enough of that article this evening, I will wish you good night now."

It was not to rest that Edith retired to her room. Ever since leaving the Vatican, those two short words, so solemnly spoken, had haunted her. In the throng, on the gay Corso, in every pause of the conversation throughout that long evening, a voice thrilled in her ear, "*To die*;" and now she was face to face with it alone. She sat down and gave herself up unreservedly to the train of thought that suggested itself. She thought of all who had thus died, as it were, on the very threshold of their greatness—in the very moment of the accomplishment of their work. She thought how the dying breath of the Venerable Bede had dictated the last words of his translation of the Gospels; she thought how the great Apostle of the Indies lay down to die in the very moment when the accomplishment of his life-long desire seemed granted him; of all who in all ages have been forbidden to taste the fruit they have toiled to bring to perfection, down to the day when the last notes of Mozart's "*Requiem*" were written only just in time to be heard first at the Mass sung for the repose of the soul of its composer,—down to the day when the dying painter gazed upon his unfinished Transfiguration, when his trembling hand could no longer guide the pencil that should have completed it.

"Is it ever thus?" she thought. "Is this the dream of the highest human intellect—to conceive a mighty work; a noble object; to live, toil, strive for it, and yet either never to attain it, or to gaze upon its achievement with the closing eye of death? Is this the end of man's creation—to spend life, energy, intellect, or, it may be, love, ambition, pride, on an object that crumbles in his hand the moment it is grasped, and then—to die?—*and then?*"

Edith shuddered; the thought was not familiar to her. Some interior voice, perhaps that of her guardian angel, suggested,

"To receive the things done in the body."

Again Edith shuddered. What were these "things" to her? what had she "done?"

She laid her head down on the table, and remained for about five minutes motionless as a statue; then, suddenly starting up, and exclaiming, "I can't bear this," she threw open the window, and drew in a long breath of the cold night air; then, drawing a chair close to it, she sat with her arms leaning on the sill, and her head resting on them for she knew not how long—it might have been one hour, or two, or three, the soul knows no such reckoning of time—but at length a violent shivering fit roused her to a sense of physical suffering from extreme cold, and also warned her that further imprudence might make her really ill. She shut the window hastily, and then endeavoured to recruit both mind and body with sleep; not very successfully, however, for a sort of feverish excitement was the not unnatural reaction from her former state.

"What have you been doing to get such a bad cold, my love?" asked Miss Brooke the next morning, as Edith alternately sneezed and coughed the whole of breakfast time.

"I cannot tell, indeed," she replied, too truthful to say she did not know, and by no means inclined to confess that she had spent the greater part of the night at an open window.

"We were driving too late yesterday evening I am afraid, and you had not your warm cloak; it was very imprudent of you to go without it; but it is no use preaching prudence to young people, they must buy their experience."

Fully conscious of imprudence, though not in the particular instance of the cloak, Edith received this little homily in silence.

"It is really very provoking," continued Miss Brooke; "we have only this one day more in Rome, and I'm sure you are not fit to enjoy it; you ought to stay in all day and nurse yourself."

"I mean to do so," was the very unexpected reply. Edith had always before so entirely refused to pay any sort of attention to colds, sore throats, or any other trifling ailments, and so utterly laughed to scorn all remedies proposed by her aunt, that this sudden change of system not only surprised but rather alarmed her.

"Are you really ill?" she asked.

Edith raised her head languidly—she had been resting in an easy chair—and said:

"No, not exactly; but it is disagreeable to travel with a bad cold; I would rather get rid of it at once; and as for seeing Rome in one day, one might as well try to learn Hebrew in a

week, it would only be tantalising to me to realise more fully that I cannot see it. But don't let me keep you in, Captain Maynard will be here presently, ready to escort you wherever you like, and I don't suppose," she added with a laugh, "that you require me for a chaperone."

Miss Brooke hesitated; she did not quite like leaving Edith alone, and feared that she was really more ill than she cared to acknowledge; but a rather peremptory "Indeed you must go, I would much rather be left to myself," decided the matter, and Edith escaped to her own room before Captain Maynard made his appearance.



## CHAPTER VII.

The star of the unconquer'd will,  
It rises in my breast,  
Serene, and resolute, and still,  
And calm, and self-possess'd.

LONGFELLOW.

CAPTAIN MAYNARD did not keep Miss Brooke long waiting, but he was greatly annoyed at finding her alone, and hearing from her that Edith would be unable to accompany them on their intended expedition—more annoyed than he thought it civil to express. It was the most selfish sort of annoyance possible, consisting simply and solely in the disappointment of his own amusement; the peculiarity of Edith's manner, so unlike what he had

been accustomed to in the fashionable circles of London and Parisian society, was a new sort of entertainment to him, and some relief to the *ennui* which a desultory and objectless life necessarily inflicted upon him. As, however, he could not talk to her, he was determined to talk of her.

"Miss Sydney is a very remarkable person," he observed to Miss Brooke as soon as they had left the hotel.

"Yes," replied that lady, not sorry to have an opportunity of speaking 'a bit of her mind;' "she is very peculiar, but you know she has seen nothing of society. I hope, when we return to England, this bluntness will wear off; there is a very good neighbourhood round Fernley, and I hope very soon to see her more like other people when she mixes with them."

Captain Maynard laughed; dull as he was he had yet a little more perception than his companion. "Mixing with them won't do it," he said; "she has too much perversity in her; depend upon it, she will pride herself upon being as unlike them as possible. Do you suppose you would break in a wild young colt simply by turning it loose into a paddock with your trained hunters?"

Miss Brooke, to whom this language was somewhat unintelligible, replied, "What is to be done then?"

"Put a halter round her neck, and the end of it into somebody's hand who has influence with her. Mind, a simple halter, an easy snaffle—not a sharp curb, she won't stand that, she would bolt or rear and fall back upon her rider and

crush him; an easy bridle, a light hand, free indulgence for all harmless prancing and curvetting, a little coaxing, then give her her head and she will obey the rein, only mind one thing, take care who has the training of her, if she were provoked into kicking she would be dangerous."

"Captain Maynard!" exclaimed Miss Brooke, perfectly bewildered, "I don't understand you—are you speaking of Miss Sydney or of a race-horse?"

He laughed. "I beg your pardon," he said: "I forgot I was speaking to a lady."

"I think you did, sir," she replied, feeling, not unnaturally, somewhat offended.

"Come, come," he said; "don't be angry; we have known each other too long to stand upon idle ceremonies; and now, seriously, let me give you one hint about Miss Sydney; don't let old Bruce make a Puseyite of her. By the way, what makes her so touchy about him? He is old enough to be her grandfather."

Not altogether pleased with the tone he was adopting, Miss Brooke replied, with a little stiffness, "She told you herself that she valued him as her mother's friend; do you not believe her? Edith would not prevaricate to save her life; she has plenty of faults, but that is not one of them."

"Doubt a lady's word! of course not," the Captain said, with a slight touch of irony, however; "only they sometimes have fifty other reasons besides the one it is their pleasure to give for a thing. Are you sure she has not a sneaking affection already for altar-candles and credence tables? I strongly suspect the head



and front of my offending was that I attacked her own pet fancies as well as Mr. Bruce's."

"Not a bit of it," Miss Brooke replied unhesitatingly; "she does not care a straw about those sort of things, and I expect she will be as much disgusted with the doings in Fernley church as I am sure," she added in a tone of righteous indignation, "*I shall.*"

"Ah! that's right!" exclaimed he, with more evident satisfaction than his companion could account for, inasmuch as certainly no one could ever have suspected the worldly-minded Captain of caring a straw what form or phase of religion his neighbours chose to adopt; "that's right. I suppose, then, Mr. Bruce will not often visit at Clare Hall."

Miss Brooke turned to him with an expression which said as plainly as any words could do so, "What do you mean by that?" and the Captain, with a hasty endeavour to retrieve his incautiousness, said, "He would be wanting to spoil Miss Sydney by turning her into a Sister of Mercy or some such nonsense; it would be a great pity for her to come within the reach of his influence."

"Edith is not easily influenced," replied Miss Brooke.

The conversation now took a more general turn, and one which rendered it much more agreeable to Miss Brooke; Captain Maynard suited her admirably; with either very refined or very intellectual people she felt uncomfortably her own deficiency in both these respects, and this was partly the reason that her intercourse with Edith was so constrained, but she was, both

mentally and morally, Captain Maynard's equal, in the latter respect perhaps his superior, though she had not as yet discovered that. They spent the day greatly to their mutual satisfaction in the kind of sight-seeing best suited to their capacities and inclinations, and on returning to the hotel found Edith prepared to dine with them, much to Miss Brooke's delight, for she had really left her with some uneasiness in the morning.

And how, meanwhile, had she been spending her lonely day? Patience was a virtue of which Edith Sydney knew nothing; impetuous and passionate by nature, delay, suspense, uncertainty, were intolerable to her; to see and to know the whole and the worst at once was always her eager desire, nor did she ever seek to conceal from herself the very least portion of what she suspected might be painful or startling; the more bitter was the cup, the more she was resolved, with a sort of fierce contempt of suffering, to drain it to the very last dregs—nay, she rather exaggerated than softened to herself whatever she represented to her mind. She had now two distinct facts before her, two conclusions, both arrived at in the course of the same day; and as soon as she found herself alone and undisturbed, she proceeded quite quietly and calmly to analyse them. First she placed the bare facts before her mind in the broadest possible way. *I have no faith in Christianity. I must one day die!* How did the last of these thoughts affect the first? In one sense not at all; all alike die, good and evil, Christian and infidel; there is no difference *then*—is there any *afterwards*?

"No, fool," said the spirit of rationalism, which Edith had long worshipped; "death is an eternal sleep, death is annihilation."

"Then, to what purpose," she asked, "have I a soul, with affections and aspirations that earth cannot satisfy—with intellectual cravings that find here nought but husks to feed upon? If death is annihilation, the gift of the soul is the greatest curse of human existence; destroy it *now* if it be destined to destruction."

"And after death the judgment."

Edith started.

"Who spoke?" she said aloud, but instantly regained her composure, and with a scornful smile said to herself:

"Aye, that is the Christian doctrine, but have I not already seen that I believe it not? What is it to me? why does it haunt me? and yet, suppose it is true—well, what then? I can live without it, and when I die—no, no; it would be unreasonable, unjust, to be judged by a standard one has never recognized; the justice of God is one article of Christian faith, so even if the whole be true I shall have that to appeal to. He cannot condemn me merely for not believing doctrines for which my understanding and reason can find no sufficient proof. He cannot wish me to be such a hypocrite as to act upon principles I do not acknowledge in my heart. And how can I help not believing them? it is not my own fault that I have no faith; if I desired ever so earnestly to have it I could not force it upon myself, I *could* not compel myself to believe without proof, without evidence, with-

out authority, divine, infallible authority, and that does not exist. All over the world, men are zealous, anxious, positive, obstinate, for what they believe to be truth in ten thousand different forms; what possible security can I have that one is right rather than another? There is only one way out of the difficulty, I will not try to believe anything that I cannot see quite clearly and unmistakably; and as for the moral law, I have too much pride to break it. There, that will do, I will trouble myself no more about it, it is no use; but," and in a tone of anguish that strangely contradicted this last conclusion, she exclaimed: "O God, this is unspeakable misery! Why hast Thou given me intelligence enough to deprive me of the comfort weaker minds can rest upon? Why hast Thou made all human voices false and cheating to me, and yet denied Thine own to pierce through the darkness? why hast Thou left the world without a revelation? a confusion of tongues, and no universal language which all can understand? But enough, I must accept my doom; there is no divine authority, and I will yield to no human one; henceforth, I will study the faith of others only for my own intellectual amusement or contempt—knowledge is power. I will *know* all, and submit myself to nothing. Only not here, not in Rome;" and Edith shuddered at she knew not what. "Rome is too powerful, too subtle for me yet; it is a glorious faith, the noblest that human intelligence has ever devised, it has a strange unaccountable power, it might conquer me, and I *will not* be conquered. I must wait till I am stronger,

but then, ah yes, that will be worth living for, to grapple with this mighty power and overcome it. Why should I fear it? why *do* I fear it?" she continued, fiercely, with a feeling of angry resentment; "I thought no earthly power existed that Edith Sydney would not scorn to *fear*, but it would be more contemptible still to disguise from myself that I do fear it—this is hateful, detestable; what does it mean? It is some vile enchantment; I will break through it. It is well we are leaving Italy."

She turned her thoughts to Clare Hall; it was with a strange mixture of feelings that she contemplated her return there. The desultory life she had been leading for the last three years suited her inclinations. She felt little disposed for the monotony of English country life; and then again, *now* she was free, unfettered, *there* she would be surrounded by duties, responsibilities, and all those restraints, especially galling to her, which Miss Brooke had alluded to on the preceding day; and Edith, wild as she seemed, was far from being insensible to all that her position as mistress of Clare Hall would involve,—very far from being indifferent to the responsibilities that would fall upon her; the burden was already beginning to make itself felt. Something no doubt there was of pride in the thought, "I would rather be the first in a village than the second in Rome;" but, on the whole, the prospect of her future life was more depressing than elating to her. She felt that much would be expected of her in her new position, and though fully capable of holding her

own, under any circumstances, she was too conscious of her profound ignorance with regard to many of the duties that would devolve upon her not to feel some little anxiety on the subject. All mere conventionalism she was resolved wholly to discard, and she cared not whom she might offend or annoy by so doing; but she was quite aware that many circumstances might occur, making it desirable, if not absolutely necessary, for her to have the advice of some one more experienced than Miss Brooke; and this was by no means a pleasant subject of contemplation to her. Of course, her natural adviser, and indeed the only one within her reach at Fernley, was Mr. Bruce; but, strange as it may seem, though he was the only person in the world she had ever respected, she dreaded the renewal of her intercourse with him with an intensity quite unaccountable even to herself; and accordingly she now set herself to ascertain the meaning of it. She had spoken the literal truth (she always did) in telling Miss Brooke that she respected him for her mother's sake, and not for his own. In fact, she knew too little of him to do the latter. A mere child when she left England for the (supposed) advantages of a foreign education, she remembered him only as a very kind, but grave and somewhat stern, teacher, from whom she had received all the religious instruction which now she was inclined to curse as the barrier to her unqualified acceptance of infidelity, and for this she was not just now disposed to feel grateful to him, though the recollection of his patience and forbearance with

her in her wilful moods, and of the almost fatherly affection and tenderness he had always shown towards her, made it impossible for her to think of him with either coldness or indifference. Edith was warm-hearted, though few gave her credit for being so ; and she felt grieved as she thought how ill she had repaid his early care of her, and unwilling that he should discover to what extent his teaching had been despised, scorned, rejected. Nay, even more than this : as she thought of it, her head sank upon her knees, and she thought,

“O, if I could be as a little child again, and sit at his feet and learn, and *trust* ! But no, no ; it is too late—too late !” she repeated, with something like a stifled groan. “It cannot be ; my fate is sealed.”

She need hardly, perhaps, have sought further for the cause of her shrinking from a renewal of intercourse with Mr. Bruce ; but there *was* a further cause, and she dragged it relentlessly forth from its hiding-place in her heart. She knew perfectly well that to him her mother had confided the spiritual care of the child she left an unprotected orphan ; she knew that he recognized very vividly the responsibility of this charge, and that, in virtue of it, he would exercise a greater control over her than merely as her parish clergyman he would have ventured upon, or, at least, that he would *seek* to exercise it. How should she meet this ? It was a difficult question. The one deep feeling of her heart was an intense loving reverence for her mother, and all connected with her ; and this

extended itself to Mr. Bruce as her representative. For her mother's sake she felt not only respect, but real affection for him, and would have borne much from him that she would not have endured from any one else, but with one limitation; and it was a limitation which she well knew he would never be content to observe. She would speak to him openly, consult him freely, follow his advice willingly on all subjects but one, and that one was exactly the very matter in which she well knew he would most desire her confidence and her submission.

"I cannot, cannot give it him," she said to herself. "Anything else, but not that. I cannot tell him I have no religion; he would be shocked, scandalized, he would hate me. I cannot bear that; 'he loved my mother, he shall not hate her child.'"

There was one subject, however, on which Edith had a restless, feverish longing to speak fully with Mr. Bruce. Various casual remarks that she had heard from time to time, both from her aunt and other persons, made her suspect that there were circumstances connected with her mother's early death which were carefully concealed from her. Every one seemed to shun speaking to her of her father, and the most distressing and painful suspicions constantly haunted her, which she was determined to take the first possible opportunity of clearing up. Mr. Bruce was the only person in the world to whom she could bear to speak of this, and also the one who from his long and intimate acquaintance with her parents was the most likely to be able to satisfy



her. From him, therefore, she was determined to hear the whole truth, be it what it might, and she firmly resolved not to suffer even a single day's unnecessary delay in seeking it. This was another cause of her dread of the impending meeting; for though her resolution never for a moment failed her, she could not but shrink from the contemplation of its possible consequences. This, however, was at all events a less harassing subject of thought than her former one; and by the time her aunt and Captain Maynard returned, she was able to receive them with a clear eye and an unruffled brow.

"You have managed very badly, Miss Sydney," was the Captain's first address to her; "you should have put off your cold till you got home."

"Do you suppose I caught it on purpose, then?" she asked, feeling, however, that she could not altogether disclaim self-will in the matter.

"Well, no; I don't suppose any one would do that," he replied; "indeed, I am afraid I may be partly to blame for it. I ought to have provided a close carriage instead of an open one for our drive yesterday."

"Pray do not reproach yourself," she answered; "I assure you I have only my own carelessness to thank for it," her characteristic straightforwardness instinctively rejecting what she knew to be a false excuse.

"Well, my dear, I am very glad you confess that," said Miss Brooke; "you know I told you this morning it was your own fault for driving without your cloak."

"Now that is too bad, when I have spoken the truth to have it turned into a lie," thought Edith, and with an expression of considerable annoyance she said, "I am more inclined to think it was owing to having left my window open longer than I intended last night."

Probably not one person in a hundred would have cared to make this explanation under the circumstances, but Edith was fastidiously sensitive about truth, not for conscience sake, but out of pride; she hated a lie, not because she thought it wrong, but because she scorned it; not because it was a sin, but because it was a meanness and a cowardice.

"You don't mean to say you slept with your window open in this country!" exclaimed Captain Maynard in a tone of unfeigned horror; "pardon me, Miss Sydney, but as an old soldier and a traveller I have had some experience in these matters. It is bad enough to do it anywhere, but here, in this climate, with its nightly malaria, it is sheer madness. I wonder you have not caught an ague instead of a mere cold."

"I did not sleep with my window open, thank you, Captain Maynard," replied Edith, coldly, but politely, and then, glad of any excuse to change the subject, she asked if he had no anecdotes to tell them about his former travels and campaigns. A few stories, in which he figured as the hero, followed, but not of sufficient interest to be worth repeating, and in consideration of their preparations for the next day's journey he left them early.

The steamer which was to convey them from Civita Vecchia to Marseilles lay moored alongside of the quay, and as Edith stepped on the gangway a dreary sensation came over her; she loved Italy, and could not repress a feeling of intense sadness as she thought that her foot had perhaps for the last time trodden its soil. Seating herself in the stern of the vessel as far as possible from the confusion of passengers and luggage, she gazed at the land she was leaving, as though it were some dearly loved friend; and as the last cable that bound them to the shore was flung aside, and fell with a desolate-sounding splash into the water, it seemed as if some chord in her own heart had snapped; but still she sat gazing on, as did the unhappy Mary Stuart, at the receding cliffs of France, till at last Miss Brooke came up and asked her what she was looking at.

"Looking at? O, nothing particular; see how the porpoises jump," replied Edith, drawing her aunt's attention to a shoal of those animals who were disporting themselves in the spray from the paddle-wheel.

After some hours of tossing on a rather rough sea, during which Edith had lain half asleep on a couch on the deck, a sensation of gliding smoothly in calm water made her look up; they were in a magnificent bay, second only to that of Naples in beauty, and deep within its shelter, couched like a sleeping lion on the rising shore, "*Genova la Superba*" lay before them. Edith started up. "O, how glorious!" broke from her lips involuntarily, but her next thought was not

spoken aloud, "what has England to compare with this?"

Genoa the magnificent, the city of palaces, the rival of Venice, the home of Doria, the birth-place of Columbus—what is she now?

Where are ye gone, ye townsmen great,  
That have left your homes so desolate ;  
Where have ye vanish'd, king and peer,  
And left what ye lived for lying here ?

The low moan of the waves that clasp her  
mouldering quays murmurs, "*Sic transit gloria mundi !*"



## CHAPTER VIII.

Is thy face like thy mother's, my fair child ?

*Childe Harold.*

On the Saturday of Passion Week, late in the evening, a travelling carriage rapidly approached the little village of Fernley. The windows were drawn up, for the travellers had come from the sunny south, and were unaccustomed to the chill damp of an English evening. This circumstance seemed to cause great disappointment to several groups of persons assembled round the cottage doors in the single street of which the village consisted ; and especially to some children who held branches of spring-violets in their hands. Not that the good people of Fernley had any idea of conferring so disagreeable an honour as a public welcome on the heiress of Clare Hall ;

but, like simple, honest, warm-hearted people as they were, they wished to show her that her return amongst them was hailed with pleasure, and that their hearts welcomed her to the home of her ancestors.

Edith saw and understood ; she was not really so stiff and cold as she generally chose to appear ; and letting down the window, she leant out from it. A murmur of " God bless you ! " spoken by more than one voice, met her ear ; and a child, rushing forward, in spite of his mother's endeavours to restrain him, threw a large bunch of violets into the carriage.

" Thank you, thank you, good people," said Edith, as something more like a tear than she would have cared to acknowledge glistened in her eye.

" What's the matter ? " asked Miss Brooke, languidly, roused out of a sound sleep.

" Nothing," replied Edith, " except that we are come to Fernley."

At this moment a heavy gate swung back upon its hinges, and the sound of fine gravel under the wheels announced that they had entered the park. Miss Brooke busied herself in collecting bags, baskets, and various little articles which had been thrown loose into the carriage, and, looking out, exclaimed :

" Dear me ! well, here we are, to be sure ; I am very glad. How pretty the park looks ! Edith, my love, are you asleep ? You don't seem to care about it."

Edith made no answer ; her heart was too full for words. Her childhood's home, the heritage

of her ancestors, and now her own, was before her; all the deepest feelings of her heart, and all the ancient pride of her race, rose up together within her. If her life had depended upon it, she could not have spoken.

But now they stopped before the hall-door. Edith was conscious of a blaze of light, and a group of servants; but she felt confused and faint, and when the housekeeper accosted her with: "You're welcome home, ma'am; I hope you are well," she could only say: "Thank you, Mrs. Mills; I am very tired; I will go to my room, if you will give me a candle."

Miss Brooke had no idea of taking things so quietly; she gave twenty orders in as many seconds: first about the conveyance of every box and bag to its proper destination, and then about the preparations for tea; and, this last matter being at length settled to her satisfaction, she sent word to Edith that she was waiting for her.

Edith privately wished Miss Brooke and her tea at Jericho together; but having no sufficient excuse to make for refusing to appear, she came down. She had taken off her bonnet and cloak, arranged her hair, and even exchanged her tumbled collar and cuffs for fresh ones. Miss Brooke looked at her with astonishment as she said:

"Why, you have made yourself quite at home already!"

"I *am* at home," was the quiet reply.

It certainly was an undeniable fact; Miss Brooke could not dispute it, but she did not at all understand Edith's practical application

thereof. A reserved, undemonstrative nature was utterly incomprehensible to her, and she could only account for it as being cold and unfeeling.

They had scarcely finished their tea, when a ring at the front door made Miss Brooke exclaim : " Who on earth can be coming here now ? " and startled even Edith.

It was followed by the entrance of a servant, saying :

" If you please, ma'am, Mr. Bruce wishes to know if you are too tired to see him for a few minutes ? "

" How very strange ! " said Miss Brooke.

Edith pressed her hand tightly on her forehead ; the thought, " This is too much in one day," passed through her mind ; but before Miss Brooke could send any answer, she turned, and said to the servant :

" Ask Mr. Bruce to come in, and tell him I shall be very happy to see him."

Possibly, if Mr. Bruce had known anything of Edith's feelings towards him, he would have deferred his visit ; but it seemed to him only natural to take the earliest opportunity of welcoming home the child who had been confided to his care ; and it never for a moment occurred to his mind that his presence could cause her either embarrassment or agitation. She certainly betrayed neither in her reception of him ; the stern self-command on which she prided herself was strong enough for that.

" This is very kind of you," she said ; " I did not expect to have seen you so soon."

"I am afraid I ought to apologize," he said; "but I was passing the gate, and could not resist coming in to inquire if you had returned safe and well."

Whatever people may have to say to each other, and even however anxious they may be to say it, the first moment of meeting after a long absence is not the time for it. Both Mr. Bruce and Edith felt this, and (as probably every one does under similar circumstances) began to speak of the most trivial subjects as a relief both from the pressure of their own thoughts and the awkwardness of silence. Presently Miss Brooke said,

"Will you not sit down and have some tea?"

"No, thank you," he replied, though at the same time he did sit down, "I have had my tea. I only came in that I might see you before we meet in the church to-morrow, where we could not speak to each other."

Edith's brow contracted with a sudden expression of pain, so involuntarily that she had no time to restrain or conceal it. Mr. Bruce saw plainly that something in his words had distressed her, but was quite at a loss to conceive what; he looked at her for a moment, and then, rising, said kindly,

"You are tired after your journey. I ought not to keep you longer from your rest."

"Thank you, yes, I am tired; good night," she replied, vexed with herself for speaking so stiffly, and yet not knowing how to help it.

"What time is service to-morrow?" asked Miss Brooke, abruptly.



"At eleven," he replied; then turning to Edith, he added, "There is an early communion at eight; shall you be too tired to come?"

A sort of shudder passed over her from head to foot, but she spoke calmly: "To-morrow? no, I cannot." Then, to counteract any impression her manner might have given, she said, in the most matter-of-fact tone possible, "It was very kind of you to come to-night; we shall see you again soon, I hope."

"I hope so too," he replied; "good night. God bless you, Edith!" and he laid his hand on her head as he spoke.

She bent it involuntarily. It was like old times; he had always done this with her; but when he was gone she thought, "That was odd of him; does he mean always to treat me like a child?"

Mr. Bruce walked slowly through the park, more slowly than was his wont, for he felt both perplexed and anxious. He was too well versed in the workings of the human mind not to see that something was altogether wrong with Edith, though whether it arose from mere temporary excitement, or from some deeper cause, he could not tell: that his own presence should have had any share in causing embarrassment to her, never for a moment occurred to him. He had not the vanity to think himself of sufficient importance. But what was the meaning of that involuntary shudder? What had French immorality or German scepticism done to her that she shrank from even the bare mention of a religious subject? Well, it was no use speculating; he would take

the earliest opportunity to assure himself of the truth.

And Edith? Annoyed beyond expression at having twice, in the course of a few minutes, failed in self-control, and thereby probably produced an impression exactly contrary to what she desired, she endeavoured to shake the whole matter out of her mind, with a stiff resolution to be well upon her guard next time. Standing at her window, she watched a little stream glistening in the moonlight, and heard its gentle voice threading through the rocks that impeded its course, and she thought of the lordly Rhine, as it sweeps the base of Heidelberg, and of the Falls of Schaffhausen. She gazed far into the distance on a low ridge of hills that bounded the horizon, and thought of the Jungfrau, and Monte Rosa, and the terrible Matterhorn. Her eye fell upon a small dull sheet of water in the park, and she thought of the noble Lago Maggiore and the sunny Lake of Como. And yet in her heart she loved the sparkling Laira, and the heath-covered moor, with its low rounded hills, better than the foaming cataract and the eternal snows—they were more *home-like*. And then all that she now looked upon was *her own*; as a mere source of wealth it was perfectly indifferent to her, she cared absolutely nothing for money, except so far as it increased her influence, but for *this* she cared a great deal. Love of power was one of her ruling passions, perhaps the predominant one,—power in any form, but chiefly intellectual power, influence over the minds of others, the subjugation of another's will to her own.

But enough ; let us go on, and read her character in her actions.

The next morning Miss Brooke excused herself from going to church on the plea of "a splitting headache," and Edith, not unwillingly, walked alone. As she passed through the park-gates, the woman who lived at the lodge came out, and, curtsying respectfully, said,

"Sure, ma'am, we're all glad to see you at the old place again ; and, begging your pardon, ma'am, you're so like your dear mother, God bless her ! it does our hearts good to look at you."

The speech was ill-timed ; Edith's heart was too full just then to bear it, and, turning abruptly away, she said,

"Thank you, Nanny ; don't keep me now, I shall be late for church."

She walked quickly through the people, keeping her veil down, and endeavouring as far as possible to avoid the many curious and anxious eyes that were doing their best to obtain a glimpse of her countenance. There were some, who, having known her as a child, would gladly have spoken to her ; but she passed coldly on, walking rapidly, and looking neither to right nor left. Perhaps many felt on that day that they had received a sad answer to the often asked question, "Will the lady of Clare Hall be like her mother ?" Edith little knew the impression she was giving ; she was not thinking of these people, and she forgot that they were thinking of her, and that by one kind look or word she might win their sympathy. O, how

much, how very much, we lose by this sort of selfishness, this want of readiness to meet the feelings of others!

On her return to the house, Miss Brooke inquired eagerly if Mr. Bruce had preached in his surplice, and if he had still the same curate as before. To the first of these questions Edith replied by a simple affirmative, to the second she answered,

"I suppose not; the person who read prayers was a stranger to me."

"What was he like?" was the next question.

"I really don't know," replied Edith, rather crossly; "one cannot stare at people in church."

Miss Brooke by no means saw the impossibility, but she did not express her opinion, and only proceeded to ask,

"How did you like him?"

"How in the world can I tell?" replied Edith; "how can I either like or dislike a person I have only seen once and never spoken to?"

This, however, was not altogether the truth. Edith was very apt to take sudden and most unreasonable prejudices both for and against people of whom she *knew* absolutely nothing, and in the present instance she had an instinctive feeling that she did like the new curate, though it would have been difficult to say why.

Miss Brooke determined to satisfy her curiosity by personal observation, and accordingly announced her intention of going to church in the afternoon, her headache having most conveniently taken its departure. The stranger preached. It was a very different sermon from any that Edith

had ever heard before, and riveted her attention. The subject was conformity to our Lord's Passion through suffering. It was of course utterly incomprehensible to her, it might almost as well have been preached in Hebrew; it was, in fact, the expressed meditation of a deeply devotional mind, and one burning with an intense, though undefined, love for Him of whom he spoke. To Edith all this was unreal, enthusiastic, imaginative; and yet she felt irresistibly that to him it was real, tangible, sensible. She was startled at times by a sudden burst of passionate feeling, which seemed longing to break through the restraint of words, and cast itself down in adoration before some visibly present object of worship. One short sentence pierced like a fiery arrow into her heart; it was this: "To what end do we talk about the Crucifixion, gaze upon the Crucifixion, even meditate upon the Crucifixion, till it draws tears from our eyes, if we fail to *practise* the Crucifixion, if we drive not one nail into the rebellious flesh, press not one thorn upon the self-exalting spirit? If we would bear the cross after Jesus, we must sacrifice ourselves upon it as He did." *Practise the Crucifixion!*—what did he mean? what *could* he mean, Edith asked herself. Was there something to be *done* as well as something to be *believed* in order to be a Christian? She had a vague idea that "justification by faith" was the Protestant doctrine of Christianity, *versus* a Catholic one to the effect that good works were the necessary condition of salvation: but as for attaching any value to acts of mortification, she had always

thought it an absurdity only one degree removed from madness.

She was obliged, however, to reserve her mental comments on the sermon to a more convenient time, for, as they left the church, Mr. Bruce joined them ; and Miss Brooke, who was never much troubled with shyness, asked him at once who was his new curate.

"You mean my nephew, Edwyn Hamilton," he replied ; "he has kindly offered me his services as curate for the present ; he and his sister are staying with me. Edith," he continued, turning to her, "I hope you will like Mary Hamilton ; she is just your own age, and will be a pleasant companion for you."

For some reason, which we will not undertake to explain, the idea of having Miss Hamilton's friendship forced upon her was extremely irritating to Edith ; but of course she had no choice but to say, as civilly as she could, that she would take the earliest opportunity of calling upon her. She did not say she should be glad to do so, or happy to make her acquaintance ; she never condescended to a "conventional falsehood."

Mr. Bruce's announcement that the new curate was his nephew stopped Miss Brooke in her intended attack on what she considered the very "unspiritual" nature of his sermon ; and, instead thereof, she said rather stiffly that she presumed Mr. Hamilton was a Scotch Episcopalian.

Mr. Bruce could hardly have been more surprised if she had presumed he was a Russian bear, and the remark would hardly have been more uncourteous ; but he was not a man to take

personal offence easily, and merely replied quietly that she was right in her conjecture.

Edith darted a look of indignation at her aunt, and then said abruptly to Mr. Bruce,

"Will you come to Clare Hall to-morrow? I want so much to see you."

Mr. Bruce smiled with undisguised pleasure, not at her desire itself, but at the perfectly natural simplicity with which it was expressed; it was her old child's manner, untainted by either French affectation or German stiffness. Whatever might be changed in her, she could, at least, still speak freely from her heart.

"I will call to-morrow afternoon, if you will be disengaged," he said.

Of course she would be disengaged, and delighted to see him. At this moment Mr. Hamilton and his sister came up to them, and were introduced by Mr. Bruce. Edith bowed stiffly to Mary Hamilton, and looked at her with something of the expression with which an angry bull may regard the matador who comes forward to fight him; but to Mr. Hamilton her manner was very different; she gave one quiet searching glance into his face, and then bent her head reverently, as if to a superior being. For the first time in her life she felt that she had met with an intellect superior to her own; and it was *this*, not any supposed holiness in him, that she revered.

## CHAPTER IX.

The river is deep, and it runneth slow,  
We cannot tell what it saith ;  
It keepeth its secrets down below,  
And so doth Death. F. W. FABER.

"You expect Mr. Bruce this afternoon, do you not; my love?" asked Miss Brooke, as they sat at luncheon the next day.

If one thing irritated Edith more than another in her aunt's manner, it was to be called "my love" by that lady; and perhaps it was this that caused her to reply rather haughtily,

"Yes; I shall desire that he may be shown into the morning-room; I wish to speak to him alone."

Miss Brooke looked curiously and uncomfortably at her. She was one of those persons who never seem able to understand the possibility of having anything in one's mind that one would dislike to say before all the world, unless it were some terrible crime; but she knew Edith too well to venture upon any interference, for which indeed there could be no reasonable cause. Mr. Bruce was, to use her own expression, "as steady as old Time;" and not even Captain Maynard's innuendoes could lead Miss Brooke into any suspicion that Edith's respect for him proceeded from any other feeling than she had herself stated.

Soon after, he came, and Edith immediately



joined him in a small room which had been Lady Sydney's boudoir, and remained still exactly as she had left it, all her favourite books being collected there. Mr. Bruce began to talk to her about her travels, and asked various questions about different places which she had visited abroad; to all which she gave such short blunt answers, that he soon perceived her mind was preoccupied, and thought it best to leave the conversation in her own hands. The moment she found herself free, she plunged straight into the very heart of her subject, saying abruptly,

"Mr. Bruce, you knew my mother very well."

He started; for it was the first time in her life he had ever heard her mention her mother; and without speaking in reply, merely inclined his head in token of acquiescence. She paused; but finding he was evidently waiting for some further explanation, she said very earnestly,

"I wish you would tell me something about her."

Mr. Bruce looked embarrassed, and still hesitated, as if waiting for some definite question; which Edith, however, did not seem disposed to ask, for she began turning over the leaves of a book on the table, evidently intending to wait quietly till he should speak.

"I hardly understand you," he said; "what is it you wish to know?"

Edith looked up almost fiercely. "I wish to know *everything*," she exclaimed passionately: "I want to know what my mother was like, what she did, what she thought; if she was happy with my father; why she died so early;

why the poor people all look sad when they speak of her ; why the inscription on her grave is so different from that on my father's."

"Gently, gently, dear child," said Mr. Bruce, affectionately, as he saw her excitement increasing with every word she spoke. "I will tell you all you wish ; but why have you never asked your aunt these questions ?"

"Asked Miss Brooke !" exclaimed Edith, with an expression of the most undisguised contempt. "Do you suppose I could talk to *her* about my mother ?"

Perhaps Mr. Bruce did not suppose it, or perhaps in his heart he was not sorry that Edith preferred giving her confidence to him. He replied, however, but in rather an absent manner.

"And yet it was to her care that Lady Sydney confided you."

"She had no choice," Edith replied ; "there was no one else who could have given up her own home to live here with me. But you used to tell me my mother had also committed me to *your* care ; was it not so ?"

"Yes," he answered. Then, after a pause, he continued, "Your mother was, without exception, the holiest person it has ever been my privilege to know : she had a heavy cross to bear, but I never once heard her murmur at it ; both her patience and temper were sorely tried during her life here."

"How ?" asked Edith sharply.

Mr. Bruce looked vexed ; but it was a case for plain speaking, and he replied,

"Her marriage was not a happy one."

Edith evidently had no mind to be trifled with; she asked pointedly,

"Do you mean that my father was unkind to her, or that she did not love him?"

"She loved him with her whole heart: your mother would never have been so false as to marry him else; she was truth itself." He spoke with great warmth, and Edith involuntarily said,

"How you must have loved her!"

A peculiar expression passed over Mr. Bruce's countenance—a slight shadow, as of something in the past; but he looked steadily at Edith as he replied,

"It was impossible to know Lady Sydney without feeling the deepest esteem and reverence for her; I was acquainted with her for some years before her marriage."

Edith was quick-sighted; she possessed in no ordinary degree that intuitive penetration of character which is the special gift of some persons, while no amount of study or experience seems to obtain it for others (except supernaturally, as in the case of a confessor); and she understood at once the apparently unnecessary allusion to his early acquaintance with Miss Lyle. It drew her closer to him; but she had far too much delicacy to let him perceive that he had betrayed himself, and she continued in a cold matter-of-fact tone,

"Then I suppose you mean that my father behaved ill to her?"

"No, not exactly that; he was always kind, but he had no real affection for her, and his irreligious life was a great distress to her."

"What do you mean by *irreligious*?" asked Edith: she seemed to be bent upon asking the most provokingly downright questions possible.

Mr. Bruce looked rather embarrassed, but after a moment's hesitation replied,

"I mean that his whole time and thoughts were taken up with worldly affairs and amusements."

"So are most people's, I imagine; was my father worse than the rest of the world?"

Driven at last to what he would fain have avoided, Mr. Bruce said gravely,

"Sir Charles Sydney was both extravagant and profligate, and his conduct was a source of constant sorrow to your mother; but we had great reason to hope that he died penitent, and you must not think hardly of him, dear Edith. God only knows if we may not ourselves be resisting more grace than he had."

Edith restrained herself so far as only to say,

"If he had been unkind to *her*, I should have hated him; I don't care about anything else."

Mr. Bruce made no immediate reply. He thought it wiser just then to let the matter pass; but this was by no means Edith's intention, and finding he did not speak again, she said,

"I suppose by extravagance you mean speculation and gambling? I really cannot see any great harm in that. I suppose persons have a right to do what they please with their money; and as for the rest—" she hesitated a moment; but her natural straightforwardness was too strong for her, and she continued bluntly, "in the present state of society that seems only a

question of degree. Was my father a Roman Catholic ? ”

It would be difficult to say which part of this speech astonished Mr. Bruce the most ; the cool indifference to all moral obligations, or the seemingly unaccountable question with which she concluded. But he felt that he was on dangerous ground, and must tread carefully.

“ Certainly not,” he replied ; “ what could make you suppose it ? ”

“ The inscription on his tomb,” she replied ; “ I did not know the English Church had prayers for the dead.”

Probably our readers do not know it either, and we must therefore account for the circumstance to which Edith alluded. Some years ago an inscription on a tombstone in the Isle of Wight, requesting prayer for the soul of the departed, being discovered by some zealous Protestants, who were greatly scandalized thereat, the matter was brought before that singular tribunal which undertakes to decide all difficulties in doctrine and discipline in the English Church, and has attained so unenviable a notoriety under the title of the Court of Arches. That learned body, after much deliberation, came to the conclusion that, however superstitious and useless prayers for the dead might be, nevertheless neither the Canons nor the Articles of the Church of England had in express terms repudiated them, and that therefore no legal offence had been committed. It was in short left, where they not long after left the doctrine of Holy Baptism, “ an open question ; ” and from that

day forward persons might with perfect legal impunity commit the absurdity of denouncing the belief in Purgatory as "a damnable heresy," and of using prayers for the dead in the same breath. Mr. Bruce, however, to do him justice, was guilty of no such inconsistency; he did honestly believe in Purgatory, though not in all that the Church teaches concerning it; and when he permitted Lady Sydney to have the words "*Ora pro animâ Caroli Sydney*" engraved on her husband's tombstone, he did no violence either to his conscience or to his common sense. He honestly thought that after long years of sin, followed only by a few hours or even minutes of penitence, a soul might possibly have something to suffer in its middle state, and that such suffering might be alleviated by the prayers of the living; of course this was very far short of the Catholic doctrine, but he had never been taught that. Lady Sydney's tombstone bore simply her name and the date of her death, with the words "*Requiescat in pace*" underneath.

Mr. Bruce was, however, a little embarrassed by so unexpected a remark; and it was with some hesitation in his manner that he replied,

"She has nowhere forbidden them."

Edith looked quite steadily at him, as if to assure herself that she had heard rightly, and replied with a smile from which she had self-command enough to exclude all *expression* of contempt.

"Then the Church of England has more wisdom than I had given her credit for."

"How so?" he asked, wishing to get at her

real mind, and having as yet by no means accomplished his object.

"Because she does not think it worth while to forbid a self-evident absurdity."

He had got at "a bit of her mind" now certainly, and by no means to his satisfaction; but he also saw clearly that he should do more harm than good by argument: he merely said, therefore,

"I'm sorry you think what has always been the practice of the Church an absurdity; however, we will not discuss these things now, and you have probably had great disadvantages abroad. Did you find an English church or chaplain in most places where you stayed?"

"I really hardly know; those English services abroad were so dull and dry I seldom went to them; I liked the Lutheran church much better."

"The Lutheran *Church*!" exclaimed Mr. Bruce; "there is no such thing!"

Edith laughed. "What *do* you mean?" she said; "it seems to me to be just as much a Church as any other."

"*Any other*!" he repeated, with an expression of unfeigned horror, which made Edith feel extremely inclined to laugh—"any other! how many Churches do you suppose there are?"

"I am sure I don't know," she replied pettishly; "I never thought about it; what does it signify?"

"Do you ever say the Creed?" he asked quietly.

"The Creed! She gave an involuntary start

as the vivid recollection of that early Mass in the Gesù at Rome rushed to her mind, rousing up all the train of thought it had suggested ; but in a cold indifferent tone she answered,

"Of course I do sometimes ; at least—" (her unflinching truthfulness suggested the correction), "of course I always hear it at church."

Mr. Bruce raised his eyes for a moment to her face, and she felt uncomfortably conscious that he had seen a little further into her heart than she intended. Of course he thereby defeated his object, as a Catholic priest would have been wise enough to know and avoid. He did not see that he was tempting her to be a hypocrite.

"And in how many Churches does this Creed profess to believe?" he said, at the same time taking a small prayer-book from his pocket, opening it at the place, and laying his finger upon the words.

There was no escape, no *getting out of it*. The words "I believe in *one* holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church" stared her in the face. She looked steadily at them ; then turning to Mr. Bruce she said,

"Of course I know there was only one Church when this creed was written ; but only a Catholic can believe that it is so now."

"You are quite right," was the brief reply.

"Mr. Bruce, I don't understand you," she said gravely ; "you seem to expect me to believe a statement contrary both to common sense and to plain facts, and which, by your own admission, you cannot believe yourself."

"How do you mean?" he replied, turning



suddenly round: "indeed I do believe it most firmly."

"And yet you admit that only a Catholic can consistently do so?"

"Certainly; but I hope we *are* Catholics."

If he had expressed a hope that they were cats or crocodiles, she could not have turned upon him a look of more utter astonishment, mingled too with an expression of contemptuous pity.

"I thought the Church of Rome monopolised that title," she said. "I have a strong impression she would deny our right to it."

"No doubt she would," he replied; "but don't you remember what old Hooker says, 'No man's calling me a heretic can make me one'?"

Edith smiled. "That is a two-edged sword," she said; "it would read equally well the other way; *calling* ourselves Catholics cannot make us so."

Mr. Bruce felt considerably embarrassed, and was perhaps not sorry that he had already overstayed the time he could conveniently spare. On one point, however, he was determined at all costs to satisfy himself.

"You have probably seen a good deal of Roman Catholics abroad, of priests perhaps. Were you personally acquainted with any?"

Edith never in her life felt so strongly tempted to amuse herself at the expense of truth; but she had too much pride for it, and merely said,

"I knew absolutely nothing of any Roman Catholic; I never spoke to one beyond what bare civility required;—and you know," she added,

laughing, "my politeness goes into very small compass."

With this he was obliged to be satisfied, though he by no means felt so.



## CHAPTER X.

There are few men in the world can say

They had a dream which they do not dream still,—  
Few fountains in the heart which cease to play

When they whose touch evoked them at their will  
Sit there no longer. F. W. FABER.

ONE day in Easter week Edith paid her promised visit to Miss Hamilton at the Rectory, with the private determination, however, that she would give that young lady very clearly to understand that she by no means wished to make an intimate friend of her. She had no intention of being intimate with anybody, and felt the necessity of even ordinary intercourse an intolerable burden. She neither felt sympathy with others, nor desired it from them. A very unamiable character, no doubt, in a merely natural point of view; and Edith had certainly no *supernatural* character as yet, except the grace of baptism, which she was perpetually resisting.

During her visit, Mr. Hamilton came in, followed by a shaggy Skye terrier, whose short legs and snub nose attested his genuineness. The dog overwhelmed Edith with such friendly

demonstrations that Mr. Hamilton, fearing it might be troublesome, called it off.

"O, never mind!" said she; "I am very fond of dogs, and I suppose they know it, for they always come to me. Don't call him away."

"You cannot please Edwyn better than by making friends with that little creature," said Miss Hamilton; "it is quite a case of 'Love me, love my dog.'"

Edith somewhat impatiently put down the little animal, which had jumped upon her lap; and Mr. Hamilton said, laughing,

"Nonsense, Mary; you know I only like him for the sake of the friend who gave him to me."

"And a very good reason, too," said Edith. "If I really cared for a person, I should love the most insignificant thing connected with him."

Mr. Hamilton looked at her with a bright smile, and said,

"I believe that is a right principle."

"Don't give me credit for right principles," she replied, laughing; "I know nothing about them. I spoke as a matter of feeling."

"But, Edwyn," said his sister, "what do you mean? It seems to me the most absurd thing in the world to let one's affection for people extend to their cats and dogs, to say nothing of their shoes and gloves, which I suppose you include."

"I only mean that the highest kind of love is jealous of everything connected with its object," replied he.

Edith looked at him questioningly; he might

as well have spoken Chinese as far as she was concerned, and he saw that plainly ; but instead of attempting any elucidation of his meaning, he turned off the subject abruptly by saying,

"Do you ride, Miss Sydney ? There is excellent turf all about this country ; you may often canter three or four miles without danger to your horse's legs."

"I am expecting a horse soon," she answered ; "but I have none at present that I can ride."

At this moment Mr. Bruce came in. If Edith felt any uncomfortableness at the recollection of their last conversation, it was quickly dispelled by his manner, which was, if possible, even kinder than usual.

"You must find the great house rather dreary," he said, after a little desultory conversation ; "but I suppose you only occupy the smaller rooms ?"

"I seldom use the dining-room," she replied ; "but I sit in the large drawing-room always in the afternoon. I like it ; a room cannot be too large for me ; I like to feel that there is space round me, that I can move freely and breathe freely. I like a room that I can walk up and down in without stumbling over a chair or a table at every step."

"What a restless fancy !" said Miss Hamilton. "I like a snug cozy little room, where I can sit comfortably over the fire in an easy chair, with my work and books close to me."

"Because you are lazy, I suppose," said her brother, laughing. "But," he continued, turning to Edith, "I quite understand you, for I feel just the same myself ; one feels like a caged bird

in a small room, and there seems no escape from *oneself*, which is sometimes oppressive."

Edith gave a quick, sudden glance at him, and then said rather coldly,

"I suppose one may have different reasons for liking the same things; but," she added, now addressing Mr. Bruce, "I don't think we shall have the house all to ourselves much longer; I mean to ask my cousin, Agnes Lyle, to pay me a visit soon."

"Do you know her?" asked he, looking a little surprised.

"No, not in the least; I have never seen her. That is the very reason why I mean to invite her; I am interested in what I have heard of her from my aunt, and from a Captain Maynard, whom we met in Rome."

Edith stopped suddenly, arrested by an expression on Mr. Bruce's countenance, like nothing she had ever seen there before—a sharp contraction of the brow and flash of the eye. His lip quivered, as he said almost fiercely,

"What do you know of Captain Maynard?"

"Very little," she replied. "He called upon my aunt in Rome; they seemed to be old friends, and she introduced him to me as a friend of my father's; that is all I know of him, and I hope all I ever shall, for I disliked him extremely."

Edith felt instinctively that she had better state these few facts as plainly and briefly as possible.

"I am glad of that," he replied, with evident relief; "he would not be a desirable acquaintance for you."

It was an unlucky remark ; her spirit of independence was instantly roused, and she said stiffly and haughtily,

"Thank you ; I can judge for myself."

What right, she thought, had Mr. Bruce or any man on earth to dictate her choice of acquaintances ? She thought it strange, however, that he took no notice of her reply, and seemed even not to have heard it ; he had turned away, and as he did so, pressed his hand tightly on his breast : she would have thought it stranger still had she known of the sharp-edged iron cross that lay hidden there.

Nobody seemed inclined to be the first to speak again ; and Edith presently took out her watch, and, saying she should scarcely be at home in time for dinner, was just going when Mr. Bruce said,

"I will walk with you as far as the church : I am going there."

It was exactly what Edith did not want ; but he did not offer her any choice in the matter, and she could not reasonably object.

"I spoke hastily just now," he said, as they crossed the fields, "and perhaps unjustly ; it is many years since I knew Captain Maynard, and he may be much changed since then."

From her inmost heart Edith honoured Mr. Bruce for this act of simple justice ; it was just what she could fully appreciate ; but she only laughed as she replied,

"If he was foolish when you knew him, he is not grown wiser since. By the way, he asked a

great deal about you ; that was what made me dislike him."

Mr. Bruce turned and looked at her interrogatively ; certainly he might be pardoned for thinking her last words somewhat of a *non sequitur*.

"I mean because he did it in an unpleasant underhand way," she continued ; "and because ——" she hesitated, for again she was startled to see that quick, fierce flash of the eye, so unlike Mr. Bruce's usual calmness.

"Because what ?" he asked in a constrained tone.

"Because he laughed at you."

For a few moments he made no reply ; then in a lighter tone he said,

"Thank you for not doing the same ; but it was not worth caring about."

Edith was silent ; she did not care to let him know how much she felt on the subject, and, by way of changing the conversation, said,

"Have you any engagement to-morrow evening ?—because, if not, I wish you would come and dine with us, and Mr. and Miss Hamilton, too."

"Thank you ; there is nothing to prevent it that I know of," he replied ; "but I never answer for other people. Mary shall send you a note."

"She need not take the trouble ; I shall expect you all, unless I hear to the contrary."

They had now arrived at the churchyard-gate, and parted, Edith to cross the Park, and Mr. Bruce to shut himself up alone in his church—no, that is not quite correct ; he was not shut

up, or necessarily alone; the doors of Fernley Church were never locked during the day,—Mr. Bruce always said that the church was the oratory of the poor, and ought to be open to them at all times. He knew only too well how impossible it often is for them to pray in their own houses; and he offered them all he had to give,—an empty church, cold, and cheerless, with a stone altar, on which, in years long past, the daily Sacrifice had been offered, and the tabernacle with the Divine Presence had rested; but what was it now? Nay, we need not ask; we know. But what was it to Mr. Bruce, as he knelt before it, and bowed his head on the cold stone step? He knew there was no living Presence there, he knew *that* had departed, and he felt it with a vague undefined sense of loneliness. Then why did he come there? what did he worship? No wonder it should seem to a Catholic a kind of mockery; no wonder indeed that it should seem what it really is. But it was no mockery to Mr. Bruce; it was the nearest approach he knew how to make to that Presence which he believed was somehow more especially in consecrated places; and, moreover, the altar was really an altar still to him. May God send His light and His truth into the hearts of all those who thus truly love and yet ignorantly worship Him! If Mr. Bruce had only known that what he did there Sunday after Sunday was the acting of a solemn falsehood,—if he had only known that for the last three hundred years Fernley Church had been really as desolate as the most forlorn ruined abbey he had ever visited,



—would he have remained another hour there as rector? No, not even if a single tangible doubt had crossed his mind.

But these were not the subjects that employed his thoughts at that moment, as, with a keen pang of self-reproach, he said to himself,

“I thought I had forgiven that man; and yet, after twenty years, the mere sound of his name brings back a feeling of resentment. How little we really know ourselves!”

It may be as well briefly to retrace here that part of his early life to which Mr. Bruce referred. At a very early age, indeed while still an undergraduate at Oxford, he had become attached to the sister of one of his college friends, and had every reason to believe that Ellen Colson returned his affection; but as there seemed at that time little chance of his being able to marry prudently for many years, her father would not permit any distinct engagement to be entered into. They were, however, allowed to correspond, and during three years nothing occurred to disturb the even course of their love. About that time a certain impatience began to manifest itself in her letters, and she wrote much less frequently; but though this gave him some pain, it did not make him really uneasy; he knew it must seem a long suspense to her, and he trusted her too entirely to have a moment's suspicion that she could change towards him. Things were in this condition when he one day most unexpectedly received the offer of the living of Fernley, and instantly started off to be himself the bearer of the good news to the young

lady, and to claim her hand. In his sudden joy he did not even wait to give her notice of his coming, but arrived unexpectedly at the Grange on the very day following.

"I will tell master you are come, sir," said the servant, in rather a doubtful tone. "There's another gentleman staying in the house, sir,— Captain Maynard."

Mr. Colson received his guest with evident embarrassment, and on his mentioning the cause of his visit, said with real distress,

"My dear Bruce, this is very unfortunate ; I was going to write to you to-day to break the matter—"

"What? what?" exclaimed Mr. Bruce ; "for Heaven's sake tell me at once! What is it? Ellen?"

"She is quite well, but—" he paused with a vain endeavour to find some less startling mode of expression ; then added abruptly, "she is engaged to Captain Maynard."

Mr. Bruce gazed at him fixedly, but neither moved nor spoke ; he continued,

"It is her own doing, not mine ; I told him she was not free, and if after that he gained her affections, you know—"

"He is a villain!" exclaimed Mr. Bruce passionately ; "but you are sure, quite sure, there is no coercion, no delusion?"

"I will ask Ellen to speak to you herself."

"No," said Mr. Bruce fiercely ; "send Captain Maynard to me."

Captain Maynard accordingly came. With the utmost coolness and effrontery he admitted that

he had persuaded "my sweet Ellen" to change her mind, adding,

"You see, Mr. Bruce, young ladies don't like to be kept waiting; I suppose she thought all her beauty would go before she was married; and as for a woman's *affection*," he shrugged his shoulders significantly, "you know that is all nonsense; Ellen Colson prefers being an officer's wife to a clergyman's—that is all."

Amazed and disgusted to the very last degree, Mr. Bruce could only say, in a tone of suppressed rage,

"Villain!"

"How, sir?" exclaimed Captain Maynard, lifting his right hand with a gesture not to be mistaken.

The action recalled Mr. Bruce's self-possession; he replied calmly,

"I am a clergyman, sir, and cannot therefore give you the satisfaction you require; if I have offended you, you must feel that your own conduct is my excuse."

"My own conduct, sir?" said he in an insulted tone.

"Yes," replied Mr. Bruce with some dignity; "your own conduct in seeking an affection that you knew was already pledged to another."

"Enough, sir," said Captain Maynard angrily; "you first insult me, and then deny me the satisfaction due from one gentleman to another. I wish you good morning."

"From Miss Colson, sir," said the servant, presenting a note.

Bewildered, stunned, scarcely knowing what

he did, Mr. Bruce leant his back against the wall, and opened it. It contained these few words :

“All is at an end between us for ever. I know I have wronged you ; forgive me if you can.  
ELLEN COLSON.”

He crushed it up in his hand, and rushed out of the house.

A few months from that time saw him settled at Fernley ; his first great disappointment had done its work ; he was now a zealous devoted minister, giving himself up in the spirit of a missionary to the duties of his calling. A few years later he had become acquainted with Mary Lyle ; and if he had permitted himself to do so, he would have loved her, for he had long since acknowledged the unworthiness of the object of his first affection. But he had now devoted himself to a higher life, and all thought of earthly love was resolutely crushed, though it may be there was some secret pang when he first heard of Mary Lyle's engagement to Sir Charles Sydney.

## CHAPTER XI.

Living or dead, good cause had he  
To be my mortal enemy. *Marmion.*

WHEN Edith entered the drawing-room on her return to Clare Hall, she gave a start and an involuntary shudder. Captain Maynard was sitting with her aunt.

"What is the matter, Miss Sydney?" he exclaimed; "you look as if you had raised a ghost!"

Edith did indeed feel as if she had raised a ghost, but instantly recovering her self-possession, said quietly,

"Nothing is the matter, thank you; but I did not know you were in England; you must have left Rome immediately after we did."

"Of course I did; how could I remain in Rome with such a powerful attraction in England?" he replied, with a look which made Edith draw herself up haughtily, and say,

"You can hardly have come so far merely to improve a casual acquaintance: why don't you speak the truth, Captain Maynard?"

It must be confessed that this was neither very polite nor quite ladylike, and nothing but the strong feeling excited by her recent conversation with Mr. Bruce could have made Edith so far forget herself—it was very seldom indeed that she did so. The captain was probably con-

siderably astonished at being addressed by a lady in terms which no gentleman would have ventured to use: it was not, however, just then his interest to quarrel with her, and in a light tone, though scarcely able to repress a frown, he said,

"You are very unkind to doubt me; but some day you will understand your own value better."

Her own value! It was a disagreeable expression, and though poor Captain Maynard was quite innocent of any such offensive meaning, it involuntarily reminded Edith that she was a rich heiress, and might not improbably be for that reason an object of interest to needy adventurers. Meanwhile, however, it was getting late. Fernley did not boast anything beyond a very homely inn, and the nearest town was six miles distant. Edith remembered her former promise to Miss Brooke, that she would give her no reason to blame her want of courtesy as mistress of Clare Hall, and her conscience accused her of having already considerably failed therein. With as good a grace, therefore, as she could assume, she invited Captain Maynard to remain till the next day at the Hall, an invitation which he immediately accepted.

"What on earth did he follow us here for?" she said to her aunt, when they returned to the drawing-room after dinner.

"You seem to forget that he is an old friend of your father's, and that I have known him all my life," replied Miss Brooke; "though he is comparatively a stranger to you."

"I never remember his coming here before, when I was a child," said Edith.

"No; he was travelling in the East at that time to recover his spirits after his wife's death."

"His *wife*!" exclaimed Edith, with a look of such utter amazement that Miss Brooke said, laughing,

"Well, don't look so horrified; he didn't poison her."

"What a fool she must have been! I don't wonder she died of it."

"Of what?" asked Miss Brooke, innocently.

"Of self-contempt, probably," replied Edith, disdaining to explain herself further; but a sudden thought struck her, and she added, "By the bye, who was she?"

"The daughter of a gentleman in Staffordshire. I never heard her name that I remember, but they must have been very much attached to each other, for it was said she broke off a long engagement to marry him. Poor thing! she became consumptive soon after, was ordered to Madeira, and died there the third winter after her marriage.

"A long engagement—to whom?" said Edith, who had apparently heard nothing else in the whole sentence.

"I don't know the least; how should I? Why do you want to know?" asked Miss Brooke, greatly surprised at Edith's sudden interest.

"Nothing, only idle curiosity," was the reply; "but I pity the poor lady; she must have had a miserable life with him."

"I should think not: she loved him," said Miss Brooke in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Not a bit of it!" exclaimed Edith, with a positiveness that quite startled her aunt, who, being herself utterly devoid of imagination, could not in the least comprehend by what process Edith had arrived at such a conclusion.

"My love, how can you possibly know?" she asked.

Edith gave a little impatient stamp with her foot, and answered,

"I don't know, I *understand*."

This was much too fine-drawn a distinction for Miss Brooke's capacity, and she gave it up in despair, taking refuge in the more commonplace remark, that she wished Captain Maynard would make haste and come, for she wanted her tea.

"I wish he would go to sleep, or anything else that would keep him out of our way," was her niece's ungracious reply.

Her wish, however, was not destined to be fulfilled; for even as she spoke, they heard his step in the hall, and she had barely time to control herself into civility before he entered the room.

"Will you not favour me with a little music?" he said presently, observing a grand piano of Broadwood's, and one of Erard's harps in the room.

Edith rose immediately, glad of anything that would supersede the necessity of conversation.

"Shall I open the piano for you, or do you prefer Lady Heron's instrument?" he asked.

"The piano, if you please," she replied coldly.



He opened it, arranged the lights and desk, and asked where he might find her book.

"Thank you, I want none," she said.

"Ah! you play without notes; that is a great gift, a wonderful gift."

"By no means," she replied quietly; "it is simply the result of practice. I had a master for two years who obliged me to learn all my pieces by heart."

"What an odd girl," thought Captain Maynard; "she is always throwing cold water upon one; she is too proud even to accept a compliment."

Certainly no one could mistake Edith's contempt of praise for humility. She meanwhile, after running her fingers lightly over a few chords, played the air of "Bella Napoli" as simply as a child could have done, and then suffering her hands to stray with apparent carelessness over the keys, kept up a sort of flowing cadence, continually reverting in a few clear sharply-touched tones to the air, then again soaring freely out, like an unfettered dream. Edith had not lived eight months in Italy without learning something of the improvisatore's spirit, and music was to her a very real and true language.

But it was by no means so to Captain Maynard; and after keeping silence till his patience was quite exhausted, he asked for something a little more lively. Edith took out an old music-book and played straight through "The Battle of Prague," making the drums beat, the horses charge, and the musketry rattle with consider-

ably more energy than the poor old composer ever dreamed of.

"Bravo! encore!" exclaimed Captain Maynard, delighted.

"No," replied Edith: "I cannot fight a battle twice over; did *you* ever wish to do so, when you were in active service?"

"Why, no, not exactly: but this is hardly a parallel case; describing a battle is not fighting one,—it excites no passion, and requires no energy."

A slight quiet smile crossed Edith's face, as she rose, saying,

"Just try; can you play a military march? You will find several in this book."

"Nay, you are laughing at me," he replied, not however with any annoyance. "I know nothing of music, except the *réveillé* when I am on duty."

"So I thought from your estimate of it."

He did feel himself snubbed now, but Edith blunted the edge of her weapon by adding more courteously,

"Excuse me, I spoke thoughtlessly; many who do understand music would agree with you, but I never could play mechanically, or do anything with my hands into which I could not put my heart." She spoke gravely, then turning off into a laugh, said, "One might as well grind a barrel-organ at once."

Captain Maynard had never read the book from which Edith was half quoting, and if he had would probably have thought it great nonsense; as it was, feeling he did not the least

understand her, and unwilling to expose his ignorance, he replied,

"Then I should think you prefer singing; that must be much less mechanical."

Without replying, she drew up one or two loose chords in her harp, and sitting down to it, played a wild Irish air, accompanying it with her voice.

He sat with his eyes fixed upon her. She was dressed with almost studied simplicity in plain white muslin, fastened closely at the throat and wrists, without ornament of any kind, except one heavy gold bracelet which had been her mother's, and which she always wore; but even this was now laid aside, to leave her arm more free. Her hair, swept back from her brow, was simply braided behind in three broad loops; and now, though her small classically-formed head was bent slightly forward over her instrument, it lost nothing of its stately bearing.

Captain Maynard could fully appreciate beauty of form, and it was well that it was some time before Edith observed the steady gaze he had fixed upon her. As soon as she did become aware of it, she brought her song to a somewhat abrupt conclusion.

"How beautiful! how soothing!" exclaimed Captain Maynard.

"O woman, in our hours of ease  
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please——"

"Thank you, that's enough," said she coldly, interrupting him; "spare me the complimentary

half of the verse. And now, as we always keep early hours here, I will say good-night to you."

"Not even *one* more song?"

"No; you have had quite enough," she replied.

He coloured slightly, for his conscience attached a farther meaning to her words. "But she cannot have meant that," he thought.

The next morning, at breakfast, Miss Brooke said,

"Can you not stay and dine with us to-day, Captain Maynard? You will meet Mr. Bruce and the Hamiltons."

In spite of her indignation at hearing an invitation given in her own house by another person, Edith could not help watching curiously its effect on the captain; he knitted his brows for a moment, but replied in a careless tone,

"Thank you; you are very kind, but I have a business engagement in London, which obliges me to be there this evening. Who are the Hamiltons?"

"Mr. Bruce's niece and nephew; Mr. Hamilton is his curate too."

"O, well, I am glad he has some society; he must have had a lonely life of it before. A great pity he didn't marry."

"Why?" asked Edith, pointedly.

The question was natural enough, but it appeared much to embarrass the person to whom it was addressed; he retreated, however, rather awkwardly, under cover of a general remark on the usefulness of clergymen's wives in a country parish.

Edith felt no inclination to pursue the subject farther, and after ascertaining by what train he meant to travel, said she would drive him to the station. On their way they met Mr. Bruce, and Miss Brooke, to Edith's great dismay, stopped the carriage.

"We have no time to lose," was all she could say, however, for he was already at the side of the carriage. She gave him a look which said as plainly as looks can speak, "I could not help it."

Captain Maynard put out his hand.

"How are you, Bruce? Very glad to meet you again," he said as familiarly as if they had been the best friends imaginable, while he heartily wished himself a thousand miles off, for of all things in the world he dreaded *a scene*. But he need not have been afraid; Mr. Bruce had at least an equal dislike to such exhibitions. A deep flush passed over his face for a moment, but he replied quietly and courteously,

"Thank you, quite well; I am very glad to have seen you."

The words were nearly the same as his own, but they had the additional merit of being strictly the truth.

"I shall be happy to see you at the Grange, if you will pay me a visit there; you know it has come into my possession now."

Mr. Bruce was not quite dead to all human feeling; he gave a glance of scorn at the speaker, as he replied,

"Thank you; my time is too fully occupied here."

Edith, who had kept her eyes steadily fixed on Mr. Bruce's countenance during this conversation, here took out her watch, and saying abruptly, "We shall be too late for the train," without further ceremony desired the coachman to drive on.

"You have an estate in England, then?" she said after a short silence. "I thought you lived chiefly abroad."

"I have done so till lately," he replied; "but my father-in-law left me this place, and he only died a few months ago."

"Was it there that you knew Mr. Bruce?" she asked.

"I once met him there. Shall you be in London this summer? if so, I suppose you will be presented, and step out freely into the world."

It seemed a great relief to him to have turned the subject of conversation entirely away from Mr. Bruce.

"I have no intention of leaving Clare Hall this summer," she replied coldly.

"O, that is cruel," he said, "to waste your sweetness on the desert air in that way. Do you so despise the world that you are determined to deprive it of the charm of your society?"

Edith laughed, but looked annoyed nevertheless.

"That may be a very pretty speech for a ball-room," she said, "but I am not used to such flattering compliments, and dislike them extremely; pray do not waste any more upon me."

"I beg your pardon," he replied, in a tone of humble apology; "I ought to have known that you have too much good sense to care for them."

"Too much indifference to the opinion of others, that is all," she answered. Any sort of praise seemed to offend her; she always rejected it with scorn—a sure sign of the intensity of pride.

Their arrival at the station put an end to any further conversation.



## CHAPTER XII.

To endure and to pardon is the wisdom of life.—*Koran*.

THE party from the Rectory duly made their appearance in the evening. Edith looked with some curiosity at Mr. Bruce; but there was not the very slightest trace of agitation or emotion on his countenance, not even when Miss Brooke accosted him with,

"We could not persuade Captain Maynard to stay and dine with you."

*We!* Edith felt highly indignant; but Mr. Bruce looked at her with a smile, evidently showing that he quite exonerated *her* from any share in the invitation, as he answered quietly,

"I should hardly have expected it."

The dining-room at Fernley was hung with portraits, arranged, however, in utter defiance of chronological (or as it would seem any other) order: historical and family pictures were

strangely mixed up together ; the fierce Grahame of Claverhouse looked sternly down upon the fair face of Sir Charles Sydney's mother in her youthful days, and Vandyke's Charles I. stood mournfully gazing upon the last Lady Sydney in her bridal robes. Whether this had a depressing effect upon the company, it would be impossible to say, but the conversation somehow flagged. It certainly was not Mr. Hamilton's fault ; he did his best to draw Edith into talk, and tried a variety of subjects, but she always gave him some answer which cut the matter short, and obliged him to start a fresh one. Miss Brooke was perpetually begging Mr. Bruce's pardon for some remark at variance with his opinions—a piece of deference which he would evidently gladly have dispensed with. Miss Hamilton was thoroughly at her ease ; but the fifth person in a small party is nearly as awkwardly situated as the third on a wedding tour, and she could only occasionally join in the conversation at each side of her. It was a relief to all parties when the ladies left the dining-room ; and shortly after, Mr. Bruce, finding his nephew was no more disposed than himself to drink any more wine, proposed that they should take a turn in the garden.

“With all my heart,” replied Mr. Hamilton ; “that picture of Charles I. looks down so reproachfully always upon me, I am glad to escape from it.”

“It is strange,” said Mr. Bruce, “what a strong feeling there still is in England for Charles I. among a certain class of persons.”



"Yes," was the reply, with a peculiar emphasis; "there is plenty of good *feeling* in England."

"Shall we come into the chapel?" said Mr. Bruce.

"The chapel! I didn't know there was one; is it ever used?"

"Come and judge of that for yourself," said Mr. Bruce, as he led the way through a wilderness of low brushwood to a little door stained all over with damp green moss. Pushing this open, they found themselves in a small Gothic building—roofed in, it is true, and thus to a certain extent protected; but what had formerly been windows were now shapeless holes, considerably enlarged from their original size, and the ivy, with which the walls were thickly covered outside, had with its usual pertinacity effected in many places large fissures, through which to insert its branches. One thing alone remained, of all that the building had formerly contained, and that was comparatively uninjured,—an altar, of the purest Parian marble.

"It is not quite in a state to be used, you see," said Mr. Bruce; "but the Sydneys were Roman Catholics before the days of Queen Bess, and no doubt then Mass was often said here."

"Of course it was," replied Mr. Hamilton; "and of course it would be still if *they* had it. Confusion seize the Reformation!"

Mr. Bruce turned round with a start; his nephew was not in the habit of using strong expressions on any subject—just *because* he had naturally a fiery, impetuous temper, he kept it generally under strict control; and though it

would at times burst its fetters, Mr. Bruce had never before been witness to this. He spoke very quietly, however.

"Well, I have no wish to defend the Reformation, but still it certainly was needed, and it has swept away a great many abuses."

"And *all* faith," broke in Mr. Hamilton, fiercely. Having once let go the reins, it was not easy to pull them up again.

"Come, come, Edwyn, this is too bad; you cannot surely look out upon the present movement in our Church, and say that all faith is swept away. Are we not fast restoring all that has been suffered to fall into decay and disuse?"

"*All*!" replied Mr. Hamilton; "yes, we are restoring beautiful churches, and gorgeous windows, and rich altar-cloths, and handsome books and vestments, and carpets and lights, and flowers. But what of the sacraments? what of religious orders? what of the distinctive character of the priesthood? what of *all* that is true and real in religion? Is it not most truly said that we copy the *prettinesses* of Rome, without either her strictness or her worship?"

Mr. Bruce was thunderstruck at his nephew's sudden vehemence; he had never seen anything like it in him before, and he did not know how long these thoughts had lain smouldering, pent up under the restraint of a strong will from breaking out into words. He saw, however, that in his present mood any attempt to remonstrate would be useless, and only said,

"Well, we must hope that will come in time;

we can at least each individually aim at greater strictness in our own lives."

Edwyn Hamilton had a tender conscience; he took his uncle's words as a rebuke, and was silent; but as he turned away a half-suppressed sigh escaped him.

Mr. Bruce saw that he had given pain, and was sorry for it. It seemed hardly wise, however, to revert to the subject, and he said cheerfully,

"The ladies will wonder what has become of us; we had better join them, I think. Are you ready?"

"Not quite; I wonder how long it is since any one said office here."

"More than three hundred years, probably; are you going to say yours?"

"Yes, and then I will follow you into the house."

And so Edwyn was left alone; the moment he found this to be the case, he took a small *Horæ Diurnæ* from his pocket, and, kneeling in front of the desecrated altar, crossed himself and said the Roman office for Vespers and Compline. What a "wolf in sheep's clothing" all good Protestants would have thought him, had they known it: and Catholics, perhaps, will say he was unreal, dishonest, hypocritical, blinding his own conscience. If so, their judgment is unjust and untrue; we cannot see a single step farther on our way than God is pleased to show us; we can but follow in humility and obedience the light we have; and Edwyn Hamilton was doing this faithfully. He fondly hoped that the

English Church would one day as a body acknowledge the guilt of her schism and return to the allegiance she had cast off; and while even a faint shadow of this hope remained to him, he would devote himself to its attainment. He did not see what is so clear to us, that a state of schism is a state of death, and that he was bound at any cost to come out of it.

When he returned to the drawing-room, his sister was singing, and Mr. Bruce was looking over a portfolio of Edith's sketches. Mary Hamilton was thoroughly Scotch, and a Jacobite to the backbone—prouder far that her ancestors had been "out in the '45" than if they had had the blood of all the Howards, and detesting with her whole heart any one who ventured to call Prince Charles *the Pretender* in her presence. She wore a silk dress of the Cluny tartan, and a brooch made after the pattern of the famous one of Lorn. She was singing "Bonnie Dundee" as Edwyn entered the room, and his ear just caught the words—

Then away to the woods, to the caves, to the rocks;  
Ere I own a usurper, I'll crouch with the fox.

He went up to Edith.

"Do you share my sister's admiration for Claverhouse?" he said; "I noticed you have his portrait in the dining-room."

"Yes, I delight in him," she replied warmly; they were the first words expressive of the slightest feeling that he had been able to win from her. "That sort of reckless courage has an intense charm for me; I hate prudence and calculation."

Mr. Hamilton fixed a peculiar look upon her, as he said,

"But Dundee's recklessness ruined his cause; the battle of Killiecrankie was sheer madness."

"No matter," replied Edith, bluntly.

"*No matter!*" he repeated, laughing; "no matter to stake everything on one bold venture and lose it! You are reckless indeed, Miss Sydney."

"I know I am," was her reply, spoken in rather a graver tone than the occasion seemed to warrant; but before he had time to speak again, she sprang towards Mr. Bruce, exclaiming,

"O, don't look at that, please," as she put out her hand to take a drawing from him.

But he quietly held it out of her reach, and fixing his eyes full upon it, said coolly,

"Why not?"

Why not, indeed! There seemed nothing very remarkable about the drawing in question; it represented part of the interior of a church, containing a picture of our Lady, before which knelt a priest in such a posture as to bring very nearly his full face before the spectator.

"Because it is nothing—only a daub," she said hurriedly: "please put it back."

He seemed, however, by no means inclined to comply with her request; on the contrary, he drew a candle towards him to get a better light, and after a minute's silence, said,

"Well, of course, as I understand nothing about drawing, I am not a fair judge; but to my taste there is more of truth and nature in this than in

any of your others that I have seen yet ; and as you despise it so much yourself, perhaps you will let me claim it in fulfilment of the promise you made before you went abroad, to give me any one of your sketches that I chose on your return."

"What a fool I was to leave it in the portfolio !" thought Edith to herself, as she replied,

"Indeed I cannot give you this ; it is not worth—not fit—it is quite unfinished."

"But cannot you finish it ?"

"No !" she replied, in a firm decided tone.

He looked round at her with some surprise ; he was not accustomed to such flat contradiction. But Edith had really no intention of being either rude or disrespectful, and perceiving that he thought her both, she said,

"I beg your pardon, but you have just admitted that you do not understand drawing ; if you did, you would know what I mean—it is simply *impossible* to turn a rough sketch into a finished drawing without spoiling it."

"I am silenced, but not convinced," he replied.

"Then you are very obstinate," she answered, laughing ; "but if you have really so great a fancy for this subject, I will make a copy of it for you ; will that do ?"

"Thank you ; I suppose it *must* do," he said, laughing in return, and still evidently unconvinced : "only be sure it is an exact copy. Do not alter the expression of this priest's countenance ; I like it particularly—and besides, it reminds me of some one I once knew."

"Botheration!" was Edith's mental ejaculation; her vocal reply was a cold "Very well."

"Is it a portrait?" asked Mary Hamilton, looking over her uncle's shoulder.

This was almost beyond endurance, and Edith bit her lip very hard as she answered stiffly,

"I never took a portrait in my life."

"Then perhaps you drew it from memory?" continued Mary; "I am sure there is too much life and reality in this face to be wholly an imagination,—isn't there, Edwyn?"

Mr. Hamilton, who during the preceding conversation had apparently devoted his whole energies to entertaining Miss Brooke, turned round at this direct appeal, but looked rather at Edith than at his sister, as he replied,

"I believe a true artist has far more imagination than we can understand or appreciate; and I am sure Miss Sydney is a true artist, and can probably imagine far more than she could copy. It is true and real exactly *because* it is her own genuine conception, and not a portrait."

Not altogether good logic, perhaps, but that was very little matter; it relieved Edith from an embarrassment, and she felt extremely grateful to him. Did he or did he not know that he was doing so? She smiled, but merely said,

"Thank you."

At this moment a servant brought in the tea; he was followed into the room by a magnificent St. Bernard dog; the creature marched straight up to Mr. Hamilton and uttered a low growl.

"Down, Carlo! be quiet!" said Edith, pat-

ting his head. He looked up in her face and obeyed, but continued to watch Edwyn with that peculiar *back* look of the eye which is so remarkable in dogs, and gives such an impression of suspicious vigilance.

"What a noble animal! But why do you call him Carlo?" said Mr. Hamilton.

"I really never asked myself *why*," she answered, laughing; "but is it not a good name?"

"Much too good, I think, for a dog," he replied, "considering what a great saint it belongs to."

Edith opened her eyes very wide as she looked at him, and Mary, turning round, said,

"Why, Edwyn, I didn't know you worshipped *St. Charles, K. and M.*"

"*K. and M.!*" he repeated, looking puzzled for a moment; then recollecting himself he laughed and continued, "O, you mean Charles I. No, not exactly, especially as he has not been canonised yet. I was thinking of *St. Charles Borromeo.*"

"A Popish saint!" exclaimed Miss Brooke; "I dare say he was only a hypocrite, like the rest of them."

To Mr. Bruce's astonishment, after the impetuosity he had so lately witnessed in his nephew, Edwyn showed not the slightest indignation or annoyance; he only asked Miss Brooke, quite gravely and courteously, if she seriously thought all the Catholic saints were hypocrites.

"Seriously? why, I never think *seriously* about them at all, of course not; but I don't believe all the absurd stories about people



starving themselves, and standing forty years upon pillars, and so on."

Mr. Hamilton could not resist a smile at this definition of the ascetic life, as he replied,

"Well, but granting that there may have been hypocrites who have pretended to be saints, surely there are saints of whose holiness we can have no doubt."

"I don't know, really; but what does it signify if there were? They were Papists, and we can have nothing to do with them. Besides, if they were ever so good, they must have done very wicked things; they must have been idolaters; and if they had any common sense, they were cheats and liars too."

"Poor St. Charles!" said Mr. Hamilton, laughing; "you allow him no alternative, then, but to be a fool or a rogue?"

Edith here interfered; whatever she may have "seriously thought," she was quite aware that her aunt was talking great nonsense; and though she might occasionally enjoy amusing *herself* a little at her expense, she did not like to see her expose herself before others. Turning to Mr. Hamilton, she said,

"St. Charles Borromeo is just the sort of character that interests me; he must have been so proud. I admire him immensely for despising everything and everybody, and going his own way in spite of them all; besides, he was brave."

Mr. Hamilton looked at her with an expression of bewilderment; if she had praised Nebuchodonosor for humility, or Nero for com-

passion, he could hardly have been more surprised.

"You are surely speaking of some one else," he said: "St. Charles's great characteristic was humility."

"I don't quite understand the humility of despising an ordinary kind of life, and enjoyments in themselves contemptible, and aiming to be a model bishop and uncompromising reformer of abuses," she said. "Pride is the only natural explanation of his conduct."

"But perhaps it admits of a supernatural explanation," was Mr. Hamilton's only reply.

"Tell me what you mean," said Edith, suddenly changing her tone and manner into the simplicity of a child.

Mr. Hamilton felt baffled; he thought himself a good judge of character, but he was puzzled now: was Edith in earnest, or was she only trying to draw him out for her own amusement? Her face did not help him to decide; it wore no expression beyond that of expecting an answer to her request. He adopted the "charitable hypothesis," and gave her the benefit of the doubt.

"I mean that he despised worldly pleasures and honours, not from any natural repugnance to them, but because the love of Christ constrained him, as it did St. Paul; and that in the great work he afterwards accomplished, he was not following his own will, but simply corresponding with the grace of his vocation."

Mr. Hamilton spoke warmly, but he was evidently exercising a strong control over his words;

Edith saw that he had a great deal more in his heart. For the present, however, she had had enough, and replied,

"Thank you, Mr. Hamilton; I don't understand it at all; but that is not your fault. I will puzzle it out some day if I can." Then turning abruptly to Mr. Bruce, she asked him if he had any friends in Italy.

"Not one that I know of," he replied; "did you meet any one there who claimed acquaintance with me?"

"No; I only thought, perhaps, you might. Have you never been abroad?"

"Yes, many years ago; but travelling was more difficult then, and I did not get beyond France and Switzerland."

"That even is more than I have done," said Mr. Hamilton.

"Is it?" said Edith, looking at him with surprise. "I thought you must at least have been at Milan to pick up such a devotion to St. Charles; but you ought to go to Rome, indeed you ought."

"*Ought* to go to Rome?" he repeated; and suddenly the double meaning of her words flashed across Edith's mind.

"Now don't be provoking," she said; "you know very well I didn't mean *that*."

"Indeed I don't know why anybody should go to Rome," said Miss Brooke; "I am sure I thought it the dullest town I ever was in, not half so interesting as Paris. I don't know what we should have done there without Captain Maynard. By the bye, you forgot him, when

you said you had no friends in Italy, Mr. Bruce."

Miss Brooke had certainly a most unfortunate propensity for saying exactly the wrong thing. Edith looked savagely at her, and uncomfortably at Mr. Bruce, who, however, replied with perfect good-humour,

"But Captain Maynard is in England now, and I was speaking of the present time."

"It was very vexatious he could not stay and meet you at dinner to-day, and renew his acquaintance with you ; but I could not persuade him. If he comes again I hope we shall be more fortunate."

Mr. Bruce made some polite reply without any particular meaning ; he was turning over the leaves of the *Promessi Sposi* which lay on the table, and at that moment was reading the account of the interview in the plague-hospital at Milan, where Lucia is reproved by her confessor for the vow she had made without his knowledge ; and then he read out loud, in the beautiful Italian words, the simple and touching answer of the peasant girl : "I did not think it was a sin that I had to confess ; and you know that we do not speak of any little good we may have done."

"Ah !" said Mr. Hamilton, looking over his shoulder, "that is the only mistake in the book ; he should have let her keep it ; I hate dispensations."

"You forget that Lucia was not the only person concerned ; if she had been, I should fully agree with you," replied Mr. Bruce.

"You think it would have been unjust to

Renzo? You think her duty to him came before her religious obligations?" said Edith.

"No, not that," he replied; "but she was not free to make that vow at all, and therefore it was not a religious obligation properly speaking. Fra Cristoforo had no choice but to release her from it; she had no right to take the responsibility of its consequences to Renzo."

Edith's lip quivered slightly, but she made no reply.

That night, as she put away her portfolio, she said to herself,

"The very spirit of mischief must have possessed Mr. Bruce to want that. I will take good care, though, that his own copy shall not remind him of anybody; it will easily be managed if I throw the light differently."



### CHAPTER XIII.

Or the harsh judgments are a gloomy screen,  
Fencing our altered lives from praise and glare;  
And plants that grow in shade retain their green,  
While unmeant sternness kindly chills the air.

F. W. FABER.

THE summer passed on quietly. Edith did not find her home dull, as Miss Brooke had anticipated; on the contrary, a life of undisturbed intellectual self-indulgence was exactly what she enjoyed. And it never occurred to her that there could be anything wrong in thus living entirely

and exclusively for herself. As long as her occupations and interests were not in themselves sinful, she saw no reason why she should not indulge herself to the utmost possible extent. She commonly spent the whole morning at her easel; and it must be confessed that the result of her labours was such as to give her the highest encouragement to continue them. She had an artist's eye and an artist's hand; and she knew it, and was proud of it,—proud with an intense interior pride that scorned to show itself, and despised alike praise and censure with the calm consciousness of power. Whatever portion of the afternoon was not occupied in riding or driving was employed in reading. Reading what? We had better not analyze too closely—not that Edith read immoral books from any liking for them in themselves; but so that a book was clever and intellectual, she cared not how wicked it was: as the whole subject of religion was at this time a torment and torture to her mind, she greatly preferred the writings of infidels; and thus her mind gradually became accustomed to a scoffing tone, a sort of sneering contempt of holiness and purity, although intellectually and æsthetically she understood their beauty only too well for her own peace. Her evenings were entirely devoted to music. She saw a good deal of the Rectory party; but Mr. Bruce had lately studiously avoided any conversation touching upon religious subjects, greatly to Edith's relief; and the result was exactly what he had intended, that she became much more free and unreserved with him, while at the same time her reverence

for him increased, and she very seldom ventured upon any open expressions of infidelity. One day she had said to him, laughing,

"Mr. Bruce, I know you think me a great heretic: why don't you try and convert me?"

But instead of replying seriously, he had only returned the laugh, and said,

"Suppose I offer to burn you instead? 'Have you faith enough in your heresy to go to the stake for it?'—a reply which mortified her extremely, as perhaps he intended it should.

With Mr. Hamilton her intercourse was very different; they seemed intuitively to understand each other whenever they spoke, but very few words ever passed between them. He sometimes talked to her about the Catholic services abroad, and made her describe them to him as minutely as possible, often, however, correcting her accounts; as, for instance, one day when she spoke of the high-altar as "blazing with two hundred lights at Vespers," he said,

"You are speaking of Benediction; only six candles are lighted on the altar at Vespers."

"I thought you said you had never been abroad or in a Catholic church in your life," she replied with some surprise.

"I did say so."

"Then you cannot have seen what they do."

"But I may have other means of knowing."

She looked at him fixedly, and said,

"Then you are asking me questions merely to amuse yourself with my ignorant mistakes?"

"O no, no indeed!" he replied, with considerable warmth.

"Then for what purpose, as you know all about it so much better than I can tell you?"

"Because a description is like a picture; the best substitute one can get for the reality."

She gave him a quick searching look, but made no reply, and led the conversation to other subjects.

Meanwhile she had by no means forgotten her intended invitation to her cousin Agnes Lyle. There was a little awkwardness arising from the fact that Mr. Lyle had so entirely disapproved of his sister's marriage that he had refused ever to see her husband; he had even carried his anger so far that, though he was informed of the precarious state of Lady Sydney's health at the time of Edith's birth, he had not thought it worth his while to hurry his return from the south of France; and it had been one of her heaviest trials never to have seen him again. Edith knew all this, and cherished so bitter a feeling of resentment against her uncle that she had always utterly refused all intercourse with him, beyond what was absolutely necessary in his capacity of her guardian; but her strong sense of justice made her feel that she had no right to visit his offences on his daughter.

Miss Brooke had invited Agnes to Clare Hall some years before, when both she and Edith were children, but unforeseen circumstances had prevented the visit from taking place; and now when she proposed renewing the invitation, Edith agreed readily.

"Perhaps I had better write to Miss Lyle, as



I know her, and she is a stranger to you," said Miss Brooke.

"No, thank you; I prefer doing it myself," was the reply.

Edith was a little tenacious of her rights, and thought that any invitation to Clare Hall ought to come direct from herself.

"Tell me something about Miss Lyle, what sort of person is she?"—Edith asked her aunt abruptly that evening.

"Well, my dear, I really don't know how to describe her; besides, I hear she is altered a good deal since I knew her: she was very pretty then, very accomplished, a great flirt, a beautiful singer, a clever actress, very fond of gaiety, always in high spirits, quite good enough without being disagreeably religious——"

"Stop, stop!" exclaimed Edith; "you take my breath away. I can't take in so much at a time; besides, it strikes me you might have said it all in one word: my cousin must be a fool; no sensible person can be always in high spirits."

"Indeed, my love, you are very much mistaken," replied Miss Brooke, seriously; "a good-tempered person is always in good spirits" (Edith kicked away a footstool): "and Miss Lyle is very clever in music and languages, so she cannot be foolish."

"Do you mean that she is intellectual?"

Poor Miss Brooke! she had a very shadowy idea of what was meant by intellectual, and, acting on the principle that "honesty is the best policy," she said,

"I really do not know."

Edith shrugged her shoulders, and said no more. She wrote a short formal invitation to her cousin, including her youngest brother, who would by that time have returned from Harrow for his summer holidays.

Before the answer came, they went to a dinner-party at Sir William Grant's, who lived in the neighbourhood; and amongst other persons they met there a stranger, a certain Mr. Bentick. During dinner Edith overheard the following conversation between this gentleman and young Mr. Grant.

*Mr. Grant.* So that pretty Miss Lyle has given up the world and turned Papist—grapes were sour, I should think.

*Mr. Bentick (with ill-suppressed astonishment).* Eh? what do you mean?

*Mr. Grant.* Mean! why, I mean what I say, to be sure, like an honest man: they say she is a novice in a French convent now.

*Mr. Bentick.* They say! who say it?

*Mr. Grant.* O, why, everybody; but I heard it from one of Mr. Lyle's servants.

*Mr. Bentick.* And you believe it on such authority as that?

*Mr. Grant.* Why shouldn't I? I know no reason to disbelieve it.

*Mr. Bentick (with excitement).* It is an absolute falsehood!

The conversation by this time had attracted general observation; and at this point a lady who sat next to Mr. Bentick asked him if he had any authority for so decisively contradicting a common report. He looked a good deal confused,

but replied that he knew Miss Lyle to be at that moment living quietly at home with her parents.

"But she may be a Papist for all that, and a nun too for anything I know," replied the lady; "if Jesuits go about in disguise, I daresay nuns do too."

Miss Grant laughed, and said she thought it would be very "queer" for a nun to spend her noviciate at home, especially when her father was a Protestant clergyman; she addressed this last remark to Mr. Bentick, but that gentleman, having already said more than he intended, quietly let the subject drop.

It was renewed, however, by the ladies in the drawing-room, most of whom charitably concluded that no doubt Miss Lyle was a Papist, and did not choose to profess it openly, lest she should "lose caste" in society.

"How shockingly dishonest!" said Miss Mabella Grant; "for my part, if I ever did turn Papist, I wouldn't do it by halves in that way. Would you, Miss Sydney?"

Hitherto Edith had taken no part in the conversation; but, being thus appealed to, she replied coldly,

"Certainly not; nor have you any reason, as far as I know, to suspect it of Miss Lyle; at all events, as she is my cousin, I should be sorry to think so ill of her."

The ladies all looked at each other as if a thunderbolt had suddenly fallen into the midst of them; they were offended, naturally enough, at being thus taken to task by a mere girl, but at the same time it was not exactly any one's policy

to quarrel with the heiress of Clare Hall : accordingly they all protested that they were " extremely sorry ; " " they had no idea Miss Lyle was related to her ; " and finally they " had no doubt the whole report was a wicked and scandalous invention ; " which, considering that they had scarcely five minutes before avowed their firm belief in the same, was rather amusing. Miss Brooke, who had listened in speechless amazement, now broke in with—

" Of course it is ; I know Miss Lyle well, and she is no more a Papist than I am. I wonder what gave rise to the report ? "

No one seemed inclined to reply ; but in the course of the evening Edith found a quiet opportunity of asking Mr. Grant the same question.

" Well, really I hardly know, " he replied. " You see they have been abroad a long time, and there always seemed some mystery about it. Miss Lyle's health was the cause always assigned ; and the foreign servant whom they engaged there, and who is now with a friend of mine, told me he believed she had been left behind at a convent, when her parents returned to England. But no doubt Mr. Bentick has better means of information ; he was said to be engaged to her. I don't know how that might be, but if so, I am not surprised that he disapproves of her cutting him in that way. "

As they drove home Edith in vain endeavoured to extract some definite idea out of all the conflicting evidence she had heard about her cousin. " A great flirt, fond of gaiety, living quietly at home, a Papist, an actress, a nun ! what irrecon-

cilable inconsistencies!" thought Edith, and she involuntarily added, "How I shall despise her!"

The next morning brought the answer to her invitation, for which Edith had watched with more curiosity than she would have liked to acknowledge. It ran thus:

"My dear Miss Sydney,—It will give me great pleasure to come to you as you kindly propose, for I have often wished we were less of strangers to each other, and my brother will be delighted to accompany me. Any day after next week that you like to fix will suit us equally well.—

"Your affectionate cousin,

"AGNES LYLE."

Edith read this note over and over, examined the handwriting, criticised every expression, but could gather nothing from it to assist her in her judgment of her cousin's character. The writing was small, but clear, firm, and legible; there was no weakness or vacillation in it, but beyond that Edith could gather nothing.

"Well, my love, are they coming?" asked Miss Brooke, whose patience was quite exhausted, finding that Edith did not speak at once.

"Yes; the week after next."

"H'm! so much for her being in a French convent!" exclaimed Miss Brooke; "I knew it was all a pack of lies."

"How long is it since you last saw her?" asked Edith.

"About three years, just before we went abroad."

"Three years; she may be changed since then," said Edith slowly and thoughtfully.

"Well, at all events, I don't think she would turn Papist; she had not a bit of nonsense in her then."

"Do you mean not a bit of religion?" asked Edith, maliciously.

In honest truth that was precisely what Miss Brooke did mean, but she was rather shocked at Edith's barefaced way of expressing it, and put on a look of pious indignation, as she said,

"My love, I wish you would not use such strong language; you quite distress me. A person may be very religious without ever showing it: you know the Pharisees were reprov'd for saying long prayers and embroidering texts on their garments; one's religion ought to be kept to oneself, and not brought into everyday life, as the fashion is now, coming in everybody's way. When I was young, people went to church on Sundays, and said their prayers in their own rooms on other days when they got up and went to bed; and that is quite enough."

Edith had once read a life of St. Ignatius, with the intense interest which a merely intellectual mind feels in the study of so wonderful a character; and she remembered well how the eager enthusiasm of the proudest knight in Spain had thrown itself into the boundless generosity of the self-annihilated religious, who would have no lower standard, even in the most trivial matter, than that under which he enrolled his illustrious order,—"*ad majorem Dei gloriam.*" She had some dim natural consciousness that the glory of

God was the end of man's creation, and that to fulfil that end a little more might be required than Miss Brooke's estimate included. It was just because she had this dim vague consciousness that she always tried to get rid of the subject altogether; it would exact so much more than she was prepared to grant. She made no reply whatever to her aunt's speech, much to that lady's relief as well as surprise, for she had fully expected a somewhat uncomplimentary one.

That afternoon Mr. Bruce called. Miss Brooke was out, so Edith had him all to herself; a circumstance which she took advantage of to tell him that she expected her cousin, and to ask him if he knew anything of her.

"No, nothing whatever," he replied in a tone as if the subject were totally indifferent to him.

It was not, however, so indifferent as it ought to have been; his indignation against Mr. Lyle was too strong to allow him to feel kindly towards his daughter, and he was not at all pleased at the prospect of a close friendship between Edith and the child of one who had so slighted her mother. He blamed himself, it is true, severely, for this want of charity; but he had naturally a revengeful temper, and that is hard to subdue.

"She is a good deal talked of, it seems though," continued Edith, not altogether believing Mr. Bruce's profession of ignorance.

"Indeed! how?"

"She is accused of being a Catholic," said

Edith, looking rather askance at Mr. Bruce, as she recollected their recent battle about the definition of the word.

"O—anything worse?"

"A flirt, an actress, and a nun."

Edith spoke as demurely as possible; and Mr. Bruce, rather puzzled, said quietly,

"All at once, or each by turns?"

"Well, I suppose she took to the last when she got tired of the first," replied Edith.

"And how much of all this is true?" asked Mr. Bruce, speaking seriously for the first time.

"I don't know the least: I don't suppose she is a nun, or she would hardly have accepted my invitation, and for the rest I really don't care; it will make no difference to me."

Mr. Bruce did not feel so sure of that, and proceeded to a somewhat closer investigation.

"By a Catholic, I suppose you mean a *Roman* Catholic: is there any ground for thinking her one?"

"Not that I could make out; it seemed to be mere gossip, but of course it *may* be true—what matter?"

"If so, I hope you will be careful in your intercourse with her."

A scornful smile played round Edith's lips, as she replied,

"And if she is a person of no religion at all, and thoroughly given up to worldly vanities? Do you prefer that alternative?"

"Certainly not; but in that case she could do you no harm."

"Come now, Mr. Bruce," said Edith, turning



her eyes full upon him with an unmistakable expression of real earnestness, "tell me honestly, in confidence, don't you think it is better to have too much faith than none at all? It strikes me that is the difference between Protestants and Catholics, generally speaking."

"No doubt it is better, as you have put the question; but I do not admit your conclusion—or, at least, you know I do not call myself a Protestant."

"Well, never mind names," said Edith, now really in earnest: "Roman Catholics believe a great deal too much, but they are the only people who believe anything with an absolute certainty. Don't you think one had better swallow a few errors than die of starvation?"

A good deal startled at this view, Mr. Bruce forgot his usual caution, and exclaimed,

"You wish to be a Roman Catholic, then?"

He had completely "*killed his own cat*," as the saying is: Edith drew back instantly, and replied,

"I asked you an abstract question, not a personal one."

He saw that all was over now, for that day at all events, and replying, "And such questions are very difficult to answer," took his leave.

## CHAPTER XIV.

Thy one great mortal sin hath been thy shield,  
By forcing lowliness upon thy soul,  
Hatred of self, and penitential acts.

*Sir Lancelot.*

It was the morning of the day on which Miss Lyle and her brother were expected at Clare Hall. Edith had promised to meet them at the station; but a sudden unaccountable fit of shyness seized her (the more strange, as she had never, except once before in her life, experienced such a feeling), and she begged Miss Brooke to go instead, saying:

"I daresay she will like better to meet some one she knows, and it is disagreeable to be introduced to any one for the first time on a railway platform."

Miss Brooke readily consented; and as soon as she was gone Edith started for the Rectory with the drawing she had so unwillingly promised Mr. Bruce, and which was now finished. It was a hot sultry day, and as she passed the churchyard, the shade of the trees tempted her to go in and sit down under them to rest. The place she had chosen was exactly opposite her parents' graves, and she could hardly help reading the few words engraved on the two stones. They were not alike: one bore the legend, so unusual on a Protestant tombstone, "Ora pro animâ Caroli Sydney;" the other, beneath the name and

date, had simply the letters R.I.P.; but Edith knew well what they stood for. One was a request for prayer, the other a direct prayer; one expressed anxiety, the other certain hope; at least so it seemed to Edith. And, moreover, this request came from her mother; it was she doubtless who thus asked prayers for her husband's soul, and she could not treat any wish of her mother's with scorn: but what did it mean? Edith seldom thought of her father, she had neither respect nor love for his memory; and as to praying for his soul, that was indeed a strange idea to one who never prayed at all, even for herself. But she began now to discuss the question with herself intellectually, in a rough sort of skeleton way, stripping off all subtleties and collateral questions.

If the Christian idea of a future life were true, it had two states, heaven and hell; there was no passing from one to the other. If people went straight to heaven, there could be no need to pray for them; if they went straight to hell, it was useless to do so; and if they were neither good enough for the one, nor bad enough for the other,—well, what then? Annihilation?—no; her whole soul revolted at the idea. A state of imperfect happiness? a sort of terrestrial Eden, neither heaven nor hell? But if this state were eternal, what use in praying for those consigned to it? But in that case, no one would ever get to heaven, for no one certainly became perfect in this world. Was there a further state of probation after death? If so, what need of holiness or repentance in

this life? what truth in all that was said in the Bible about the impossibility of salvation for those dying in a state of sin? Was there a state of purification? Then why not for all, bad as well as good? Was God so capricious that it was a chance, so to speak, who should pass through that state? Did it depend upon our prayers? and, if not, what use in offering them?

At this point in her meditation, Mr. Hamilton came out of the church and passed near her; she started up.

"Won't you speak to me?" she said.

He looked towards her mother's grave, as if in explanation of his conduct; and Edith, who was little accustomed to any regard for her feelings from others, was touched with gratitude for it in her heart. But not caring to show this, she went forward to meet him, and said abruptly,

"Mr. Hamilton, I want to know—would you mind telling me—" Then, annoyed with herself for blundering, she plunged desperately forward, "What is the meaning of prayers for the dead?"

It was one of the very last questions he would have expected from her; but he neither started nor looked surprised; he only hesitated a moment before he answered very gravely,

"I wish you would ask Mr. Bruce; I am quite unable to teach you."

"Unable to teach" her! Here was a confession for one who professed to be authorised "to do the office and work of a priest in the Church of God!"

Edith looked at him steadily.

"But you can give me your opinion," she said.

"No," he replied; "it is not a question of opinion, but an article of faith."

"An article of faith!" she exclaimed in unfeigned astonishment; "why, it is not even in the Creed!"

Mr. Hamilton smiled. "I believe Catholics would say it *is* in the Creed," he said, "under the head of the Communion of Saints."

"Catholics? Yes, I suppose, because their Church tells them so; but do you yourself think there is any use in praying for people after they are dead?"

He could not help noticing how adroitly she had shifted her question so as to meet his refusal to give her any instruction, and he noticed it with pain; it was not the first time she had appealed to his private judgment, and he dreaded any tendency which might lead her to rest her faith on some self-chosen human authority. That she might do so on his own never occurred to him—he had not one grain of self-esteem in his character; but he had studied Edith's mind, he understood her better than she understood herself, he knew that where she could reverence she would trust implicitly, and he knew the snare to which this would expose her. He replied gravely,

"When I said Catholics, I meant to include myself; I believe that these prayers have the authority of the whole Church from the earliest times, and therefore if I wished to deny their efficacy, I certainly have no right to do so."

"But do you think the Church right or wrong

in sanctioning them? that is what I want you to tell me," said Edith, impatiently.

There was a sudden sharp contraction of the brow, as if caused by physical pain; then he looked kindly at her, and speaking very gently, replied:

"Miss Sydney, how would you answer an infidel who asked you whether you thought the Bible right or wrong in teaching that a special blessing is attached to purity of heart?"

Edith turned a little from him. What was it that gave him this strange power over her? She was completely subdued, and she felt it, acknowledged it to herself, and yet not without much inward chafing. Slowly, and in a stiff constrained tone, she answered:

"I suppose one must say that the Bible speaks the truth, because it is the word of God."

In the same gentle tone he continued:

"Are you *sure* that it is the word of God? *How* do you know it? Can you prove it? On what authority are you convinced that the passage to which I referred is a correct statement of our Lord's own words—that it has never been tampered with—that our own translation is faithful to the original?"

Edith trembled, but she had self-command enough to reply:

"I suppose any Greek scholar can easily settle that question."

"No doubt, if you are satisfied of the authenticity of modern Greek Testaments; but who can refer now to the original manuscripts of the Apostles and Evangelists?"

She was half-tempted to break down, to own herself utterly at sea, without faith, without hope; but her pride was too strong for that—she leant upon it, and for the present it supported her.

“In Heaven’s name, what do you believe yourself, that you can afford to pull Christianity up by the roots in this way?” she said.

A quick flash gleamed in his eye, and with a sudden burst of passionate eloquence, he exclaimed,

“I believe that the Church is the living, speaking organ of God’s truth, the voice of the Holy Ghost, piercing like a flame of fire through the darkness of human intellect and reason, and like a sharp sword severing truth from error, clearly, definitely, certainly, without the possibility of a falsehood, or the shadow of a hesitation, for it is God Himself.”

Edith gazed at him in speechless astonishment, but she was perhaps still more astonished when the enthusiasm seemed to die out as suddenly as it had been kindled, and he spoke gently and quietly.

“Forgive me if I have pained or startled you; I have spoken very wrongly.”

Very wrongly!—what did he mean? Edith put her own interpretation upon it, and replied at once, candidly and generously:

“You mean that you have betrayed yourself. Do not be afraid, *I* shall never betray you; can you trust me?”

“Betrayed myself? what do you mean?” he said.

"Mr. Hamilton," she replied, earnestly, "do not deceive me; how can you believe what you have just said, and remain in the English Church?"

He started, and again there came that sudden sharp contraction as of physical pain; then he answered in a low earnest tone:

"I cannot answer you that; it would require more time than either of us can give now to the subject. I can only say that I do not at present see my position in the English Church to be untenable; I do not see the duty of leaving it: if I did, I should not hesitate even a single day."

"But you must be miserable; thinking as you do, it must be like a prison to you."

He pressed his hand for a moment to his brow.

"It is my cross," he said, "and my penance."

Edith knew nothing of such language as this, and was thoroughly perplexed. In the first place, it was very strange of him to speak to her in this manner at all; and in the next place, what did he mean by it? One half of his character she understood by her mere natural penetration, but the other half was a sealed book to her; and for the first time she perceived this. She understood perfectly that he was passionate, impetuous, enthusiastic, restless, and eager, impatient of control: so far she could read plainly, but she could read no farther. Something, no matter what, in his past life had taught him humility and self-distrust. She understood one thing, however, perfectly, namely, that she was getting



out of her depth, and had better retreat while she could.

"We have wandered a good way from our starting-point," she said, "and I am no nearer the answer to my question than I was before. But no matter; you have given me something to think about. I must leave you now, for I shall hardly have time to take this to the Rectory, and get home before my cousin arrives."

It was an evident relief to Mr. Hamilton to have the conversation brought to a conclusion, and he did so effectually by offering to take her drawing to the Rectory, and so spare her the longer walk. Edith gladly accepted this; she was afraid he would have offered to accompany her (she might have given him credit for more tact than that), and felt equally unwilling either to continue their former conversation or to begin a fresh one.

She walked home rapidly, without giving herself any breathing time for thought; she felt as if she could not bear it just then.

The carriage had not come back, though it was full time if the train had been punctual, and she sat listlessly at her boudoir window watching for it. Six o'clock struck—seven: she started; was it possible a whole hour could have passed? had she been asleep? Yes, that really was the very unromantic fact; she had slept from sheer mental exhaustion and weariness. But what could be the matter that they never came? Some one knocked at the door; it was her maid.

"If you please, ma'am, the cook says the dinner is spoiling."

"I suppose so," replied Edith in a tone of indifference; "but it cannot be helped. If the fish is spoilt we must dine without it, that is all; she must manage as well as she can with the rest, tell her."

"Will you not have your own served up now, ma'am? If the carriage is waiting for the next train, it will be nine o'clock before they come."

"No, certainly not, thank you."

She longed to add, "Do go and let me alone;" but she had a grateful nature, and never received an intended kindness roughly, even when it worried her.

Annette looked distressed; she held the opinion common with servants, that a disinclination to eat implied an alarming state of health.

Edith smiled at her look of dismay, and said:

"You may bring me a glass of wine and a biscuit, Annette, if you like;" and the girl departed on her errand.

"The next train"—Edith had not thought of that; and indeed, when she did think, it was but poor comfort, for that train had no connection with the branch line on which Agnes Lyle would have to travel. Surely there must have been some accident: it was now half-past seven. But just then the sound of carriage-wheels struck upon her ear; she looked out. Yes, they were actually coming up the drive. It was an open carriage, and the temptation was irresistible. Edith seized an opera-glass, and gave one searching look at her cousin. We will not now describe what she saw; the result in her own thoughts was, "How I shall despise her!"—a charitable

beginning certainly of cousinly friendship ; but charity was not one of Edith's virtues. She was better pleased with the handsome yet childish face of the boy who sat opposite the two ladies, reading, or being supposed to read, one of those small-print gay-coloured books so familiar to railway travellers.

Edith was not of a demonstrative nature ; she did not rush down into the hall and overwhelm her guests with assurances of the anxiety their delay had caused her ; she did not even inquire as to its cause. She waited quietly in her room till the first bustle of the arrival was over, and then rather slowly descended the broad stone staircase, at the foot of which the party was now assembled.

"How do you do, Miss Lyle ? I am very glad to see you.—And you too, cousin Harry," she added, turning, and shaking hands with that young gentleman much more cordially than she had done with his sister.

No wonder Agnes felt chilled and repulsed. She did not know that Edith had merely followed her ordinary custom of not expressing more than she really felt, and did not at all intend to imply any special coldness in her reception. Miss Brooke was somewhat impatient.

"Indeed," she said, "I think you may well be glad, after the fright you must have had. I am sure I was half dead with terror, waiting nearly two hours for the train, and thinking all the time it might be smashed."

Edith did not carry her principles of honesty quite to the extent of saying that it would have

been a matter of great indifference to her if her cousins had been smashed; she only said:

"I did feel anxious; but now that I see you are all safe, I had almost forgotten it. But you must be tired, Miss Lyle, and hungry too, perhaps; let me show you your room."

"Thank you," was the only reply Agnes felt it in her power to make; but she charitably thought that perhaps her cousin was either unwell, or worried about something, and thus mentally excused her apparent coldness. The "Thank you," however, was accompanied by a smile so bright and winning, that Edith felt ashamed, conscious of how little she had deserved it. And as they entered the room together, she said in a warmer tone.

"I see you are not hurt, but I am afraid you have been frightened; was there any accident?"

"None really, thank you; only a luggage-train broke down, and it took some time to clear the line before any other trains could pass. I am afraid poor Miss Brooke had the worst of the fright, and she must have been very tired of waiting for us."

"I don't think Miss Brooke is ever tired of waiting," replied Edith; "she is always equally happy and contented everywhere, if she has a book or her knitting—a most enviable state of indifference, is it not?"

"Or of unselfishness," said Agnes, quietly.

Edith looked surprised; it had never struck her that her aunt's good-nature could proceed from any other cause than indifference: she never gave any one credit for more virtue than she

could plainly discover in them. But she made no reply to her cousin's suggestion, and, after begging her not to change her travelling dress, left her to prepare for dinner. During that meal she addressed her conversation chiefly to Harry, taking care, however, not to lose a word of what passed between the other two ladies: she was taking observations very much after the fashion of a general reconnoitring a fortress he is about to besiege.

Harry Lyle was a bright high-spirited boy of sixteen, with a countenance clear and open as the noonday, eyes which looked full into your face with a mixture of childish simplicity and conscious uprightness, and a mouth uniting his sister's winning smile with a manly expression of firmness, which would have seemed premature, if it had not been wholly free from the least approach to scornfulness. He was a little shy, as all boys of that age are with ladies, but not ungracefully so; and being entirely free from self-consciousness, he was also entirely without any sort of awkwardness.

"I hope you will not find it very dull here, Harry," Edith said. "I have no shooting to offer you, but there is plenty of fish in the river, if you have any fancy for that sport."

Now Harry's private opinion of the art of angling was that it was "all humbug;" but he did not think it would be quite civil to say so, and he therefore replied,

"Thank you, Miss Sydney; but I am afraid I can't fish—I don't even know how to bait a hook."

"Well, that's an honest confession, at all events," she said, laughing; "and I suppose it implies that you don't much care to learn. Do you like riding better?"

"O yes, that is capital fun," he replied.

"Well, then, you shall have a capital pony, that you may do anything you like with, except throw it down; it will carry you over any of the fences in the park famously, and is the most good-tempered creature I ever rode."

Harry's face beamed with pleasure as he accepted this offer with unmistakable gratification.

Meanwhile Edith overheard Agnes say, in reply to a question from Miss Brooke,

"Yes, indeed I do remember it well, for it was the last time I ever sang that song."

The song in question was "*Quando lasciavi la Normandia*," from "*Robert le Diable*."

"The last time then you ever acted the part of Alice?" continued Miss Brooke; "that is a pity, it suited you so well. Why did you give it up? and what was the next character you tried?"

Agnes Lyle was not merely pale, she was almost colourless; but at this question a red tinge, not deep indeed, but very perceptible, suffused her whole face; as she answered,

"The next character I tried was my own, and I have kept to it ever since."

She spoke in a light tone, though with a quiet earnestness which was not lost upon Edith.

"You have given up acting, then, altogether?" asked Miss Brooke.

Agnes smiled as she replied,

"Or, rather, it has given *me* up. You know I had a long illness after I saw you last, and I have never been very strong since."

The evening was very short, for Agnes was tired, and glad to go to bed. As she wished her cousin good-night, she said,

"Will you not call me Agnes instead of Miss Lyle?"

"By all means, if you please. We may as well be Christian-like to each other, certainly. I hope you will call me Edith."

And so this point was settled.

Edith went to her room by no means inclined to swerve from her original intention of despising her cousin; but she could not help acknowledging to herself that there was something very attractive about her. In person she was very small, and so slightly made that in olden times she might well have passed for a fairy; her figure was perfect in its proportion and symmetry, and there was an elasticity about every movement that was peculiarly graceful, and was rendered still more remarkable by its contrast with the expression of weariness and languor which came over her when quiet and silent. Perhaps few who now looked into her face would have called it beautiful; and yet once its singular loveliness had eclipsed that of the most renowned belle of the season.

Was Agnes Lyle grown old, then, at five-and-twenty? or was she marked with small-pox, or any other disfiguring scourge? Not that; but an expression so utterly foreign to her natural character had settled upon her features that they

could not attune themselves to it. There was something self-contradictory, something which at first sight seemed to imply affectation or hypocrisy, and destroyed the charm of those large, soft, blue eyes, shaded by long curls of the lightest flaxen hair, and made you distrust the smile of that small perfectly-formed mouth.

Thus far Edith had seen, but no farther; and on this testimony she despised Agnes Lyle.



## CHAPTER XV.

If thou hadst kept thy faith with me  
I might have been thy votary still;  
But ah!—lost love and broken faith—  
Poor world! these are beyond thy skill.

F. W. FABER.

No allusion to any part of her past life ever passed the lips of Agnes Lyle without strong necessity; and we will therefore make our record of it as brief as may be. But something it is needful to say—nay, a good deal—if we would have her thoroughly understood as we desire her to be. She was the only daughter of a clergyman who held a living of some importance in a large provincial town, unhappily for the souls committed to his care; for he had “gone into the Church,” as Protestants say, without even the pretence of any vocation thereto, but simply because, not having sufficient private fortune to live comfortably without a profession, he had



chosen that which after due deliberation he considered the most gentlemanly and the least troublesome. His chief aim had been to secure to himself a cheerful home and plenty of society, and he certainly had attained it. He had married a clever and accomplished woman, whose beauty and talents soon drew around her all the so-called "best society" of the neighbourhood; and not being troubled with inconvenient scruples of any kind, he partook freely of all the amusements the place afforded, kept a good hunter whereon he followed the squire's hounds, a gun and a shooting pony for more quiet sport, a brace of pointers, a setter, and a magnificent retriever which always accompanied his walks and rides. Mrs. Lyle was emphatically a woman of the world. Having satisfied her conscience as a clergyman's wife by a profuse distribution of soup and blankets in the winter, and "relief" of various kinds almost as often as it was asked for, she considered herself quite at liberty to gratify or amuse herself to any extent within the bounds of conventional respectability. Her great object in life was to see her daughter make a brilliant marriage, and to attain this nothing was spared. Agnes received what is called a first-rate education—that is to say, she was taught every accomplishment and every art that was likely to attract or please others, and she was taught moreover how to use these to the best possible advantage. Possessing both beauty of person and fascination of manners to a remarkable extent, she was skilfully taught both her power over others and that cruel heartless use of

it which is so often the cause of more deadly ruin than poison or the knife in a murderer's hand.

And Agnes had learnt her lesson well, all the better that she was herself utterly indifferent to the effect she produced. She knew that she was beautiful, and therefore admiration came to her as a matter of course; she did not care to seek it. She knew she had a perfect voice and a faultless ear, and therefore when every sound was hushed the instant she began to sing she only took it as her rightful homage, and felt no pleasure in it. She knew that she had power to attract or repel as she pleased, with one glance of her eye, one tone of her voice, and it simply amused her to use this power even to this extent, for Agnes was no vulgar flirt; she had far too much delicacy and refinement of mind for that; and when she attracted others, it was through the stirring of the better and holier part of their natures that she drew their hearts towards her. Over and over again had she done this, and then cast them from her with the utter recklessness of one who knows not what she trifles with.

She did not know; it never occurred to her, even in her most thoughtful moments, that the guilt of spiritual murder was on her soul—that among those whose feelings she had made her sport, some had sought forgetfulness in a reckless self-abandonment to mortal sin.

But the retribution came at last. Already Agnes had spent two seasons in London, and her mother was far from well pleased with her

for having as yet failed to secure the brilliant establishment she desired for her, when, during a visit in the country, she received an offer from a Mr. Bentick, which, in respect of worldly advantages, was perfectly satisfactory; and as she had no reason for refusing it, except the very unimportant one that she did not care for him, it was accepted. Agnes looked forward to her future life as to a sort of doom that she must accept and make the best of, seeking her happiness not in, but independently of, her home. It was rather a dreary prospect; but still, after all, no doubt Mr. Bentick would be very kind to her, and if she did not love him—at all events she loved no one else—very likely affection would come of itself after marriage; and if not, no matter, she could be just as happy without it. She had no fear of failing in her duty as a wife, and she would be at no loss either for intellectual employment or agreeable society; it was quite as comfortable a prospect as she could reasonably look forward to. Marrying for love was all nonsense. She would have all this world's enjoyments to the full—she would be very discontented not to be satisfied with that; and as for the next—well, what difference could it make to that whether she married one person or another?

But the very fact that she did reason in this way with herself proved that there was something deeper down, secretly suggesting other and truer thoughts—thoughts which it became every day harder and harder to crush down and stifle; and in this state the relief was unspeakable to her of

receiving an invitation to spend a few weeks with some friends who had not as yet heard of her engagement, and whom she determined to keep in ignorance of it, that she might escape from congratulations that were becoming every day more irksome to her.

This family consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley, two daughters, and a son, who had just left Oxford and was reading for the bar. During the first few days of her visit Agnes felt bored to death, for the whole family were most energetic Anglicans, went to church twice a day in all weathers, said certain prayers, which they called "the Hours," to Agnes's utter bewilderment, three times a day in an oratory full of pre-Raphaelite pictures, and containing one small crucifix, which was carefully covered over at all other times; fasted rigidly every Friday and Vigil; worked nothing but antependiums; read very little but Anglican translations and altered versions of Catholic books; and played and sang only sacred music. The two daughters at first made a vigorous attempt to convert Agnes, which she as vigorously resisted, and grievously scandalised them by a strongly-expressed conviction that it was no use trying to unprotestantise the Church of England, and that if they were not content with it they had better come out of it.

Arthur Stanley had both more sense and more feeling; he never *spoke* of religion to Agnes, or indeed to any one—men seldom do; but it was impossible to know him without finding out that he *practised* it. Two things in particular Agnes soon remarked, perhaps because they were so

contrary to her own accustomed habits: Arthur Stanley habitually considered any one else's convenience rather than his own; and never allowed the most specious arguments to turn him from any line of conduct (even in ordinary trifling matters) that he believed to be right.

He soon more than suspected that Agnes had some secret trouble, and felt grieved that the true remedy should be presented to her in a form which only repelled her from it. He longed to help her, and at last an opportunity was thrown in his way, of which he eagerly availed himself.

A slight cold had prevented Agnes from joining the others in their drive, and she was sitting alone in the drawing-room, when Arthur came in, and found her with the "Christian Year" in her hand. She was so intent upon what she was reading that she never looked up; but after a few minutes put down the book with so deep a sigh that, not thinking it fair to let her fancy herself alone, he said,

"You are fond of poetry?"

She raised her eyes slowly, as if she had not quite understood the question, and said,

"Is this poetry?"

"Did you think it was prose?" he replied, laughing.

"No; but it seems so true. It is like a sermon."

Arthur could not help smiling; but he did not at once push his advantage. "You know," he said, "the old heathen poets were looked upon as teachers by the people; and in later times,

look at Dante—is there not something in the ‘Divina Commedia’ very like a sermon?”

“Yes, but that is very different,” Agnes replied; “this goes deeper, comes more home to one.”

“Shall I tell you why?” he said. Agnes did not immediately reply, and without waiting for her to do so, he went on: “Because it is written by a holy man, expressly for the help and consolation of many who in these days find but little sympathy in the world around them.”

Agnes turned to him quickly. “Does it satisfy them?” she said. “Does your church-system, as you call it, really do what this book professes—really guide people in perplexity, or comfort them in sorrow?”

“Yes, if it is fully carried out,” he answered.

“I suppose you call it fully carried out here,” she said; “and I am afraid I shall shock you by confessing that I find it little more than a dreary round of formalities.”

“Not in the least,” he replied; “I should be surprised if you found it anything else. It is new and strange to you; you are not at home in it; but you would be after a time. You would find the daily service the greatest possible source of comfort and sympathy—the words always seem exactly to meet one’s own needs; and the prayers of the Church must surely have a greater blessing attached to them than any we can use for ourselves. Do you not think it is a great privilege to have all we can want put into words for us, and offered up by one specially appointed to present our prayers to God?”

"Perhaps; yes, I suppose it ought to be; but it seems cold and lifeless. I want something more."

"What more?" said Arthur.

"I don't know, I can't explain," she said; "it seems so selfish; but you seem to be always praying, and working, and doing things for God, and getting nothing from Him in return. I should want to *hear* Him answer me, to see Him, to feel Him, to touch Him, to have a living consciousness of His presence. You have not that?"

Mr. Stanley hesitated. He had been brought up under a system which inculcated what it termed "the doctrine of reserve," *i. e.*, the principle that Catholic truth was only to be put cautiously and guardedly before certain minds which had been gradually trained to receive it; that to expose it rashly to the uninitiated was a profane casting of pearls before swine; that it must be propagated secretly, but would only do harm if taught openly;—a system which encouraged confession privately, but would rather see thousands of souls perish than "offend the weaker brethren" by preaching the Sacrament of Penance in the hearing of those who most needed it; and which led one of its chief advocates, when compelled to publish a sermon on the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist, to express "deep regret" in doing so, because of the misconstruction to which it would be exposed.

"Have you no answer?" asked Agnes, in such a dreary, hopeless tone that he could bear it no longer, and said quickly,

"Yes, in the Sacraments."

"But *how*?" she asked.

"Reserve won't do here," thought Arthur; and, turning to her gravely, he said,

"I am a most unfit person to teach, Miss Lyle; but I think the sixth chapter of St. John will answer your question. You know the whole Catholic Church applies it to the Holy Eucharist; and how can we have a nearer consciousness of His presence than by having it actually within us?"

"What do you mean? I don't remember," said Agnes, who was not much in the habit of reading her Bible.

He took up the book and read the whole passage slowly and solemnly. Agnes fixed her eyes upon him with a gaze becoming every moment more painfully intense; and, as he laid down the book, she said, almost gasping for breath,

"You believe *that* when you go to Communion?"

"I do," he said, speaking briefly, for he was rather alarmed at the agitation he saw he had excited.

"If *I* did, no power on earth should induce me ever to receive it again," she replied, with a terrified look.

"O," thought Arthur to himself, "what mischief have I done now?" and in a low voice he asked her why.

"Why?" she repeated, "why? Mr. Stanley, you know what a careless, thoughtless, worldly life I have led, and you ask me *why* I should be afraid!"



"That is exactly why you ought to come," he said; "for grace to live better. We can only get that through the Sacraments."

Agnes looked puzzled and distressed; her own good sense taught her in some degree, but her utter ignorance of theology made her at a loss how to express herself. She said, however,

"Is one simply to ignore all one's past life, then? Forgive me if I am speaking foolishly—*but, in short, what becomes of it?*"

Arthur Stanley looked at her steadily. For a moment he debated with himself whether it might not be better to give her some hint of the existence of the Sacrament of Penance (as far, at least, as he understood it himself); but the mischievous principle of reserve was too much for him, and he contented himself with replying,

"It must of course be repented of and forgiven."

Agnes was silent; she dared not ask *how*. He spoke as if it were something so simple, so easy, so, in his own words, "of course," that she was ashamed to own herself more perplexed than ever; and besides, it suddenly occurred to her that Mr. Stanley was a young man, and not even a clergyman, and that he was not, perhaps, exactly the right person for her to talk to on such a subject; and yet he was so kind, so sympathising, it was such a comfort to speak to *any one* who would be so patient and gentle with her—too great a comfort to be rejected when it seemed the only one within her reach.

Just then, however, it seemed impossible to say more, and the conversation ended almost

equally unsatisfactorily for both parties; for Mr. Stanley saw plainly that more definite instruction was necessary, and yet hesitated to give it. Neither did he like to ask his clergyman's advice in the matter, thinking it would hardly be honourable to betray Agnes's confidence. Consequently he determined to be guided by circumstances and his own judgment.

One thing that gave him great influence with Agnes was their mutual appreciation of every form of "high art," whether in poetry, music, or painting. The evenings were generally spent at the piano; and though at first Agnes had greatly shocked the Miss Stanleys by saying that she constantly went to Catholic churches in London to enjoy the music, she soon found that they liked nothing better themselves than to listen to her beautiful rendering of the "*Alma Redemptoris*" or "*Ave Maris Stella*."

She noticed, however, that Arthur Stanley always left the room on these occasions, and she once asked him why. He replied that it was against his conscience to listen to forms of devotion in which he could not join, and proceeded to enter a rather grave protest against the practice of attending Catholic churches for mere amusement, as if they were theatres or concert-rooms. This view of the matter was simply incomprehensible to Agnes; she replied,

"Well, at all events, *I* need have no such scruples. Thanks to my ignorance, *I* can enjoy the music without any danger of my mind being corrupted by the words; for *I* neither know nor care what they mean."

Mr. Stanley raised his eyes to her face for a moment with an expression of unmitigated astonishment. Was it possible that while he had been almost overwhelmed with the tenderness of her tones in the most touching passages of the "Stabat Mater," *she* was literally ignorant of the meaning of the words to which her voice gave so thrilling an expression? Was all that appearance of deep feeling a mere piece of acting, mere singing *for effect*? It was a new and a most painful light to fall upon her character, and there was something of sternness in his manner as he said,

"I thought you were in earnest, Miss Lyle. I should never have suspected *you* of unreality."

Agnes turned abruptly from him to conceal the deep blush which suddenly overspread her whole face and neck. *She* in earnest, *she* real, whose whole life had been studied and artificial; who was at that very moment only snatching a brief respite from preparations for the final act of the drama she had so recklessly played by the concealment of her engagement! Like a sudden revelation the hatefulness of her own character flashed upon her; but she retained enough self-possession to turn back with a conventional smile, and in a most ordinary tone and manner to say,

"Thank you for your good opinion, Mr. Stanley; I was not at all aware of having earned it."

It was not the sort of reply he had expected; it disappointed him, and yet he could hardly tell why. After all, what was Agnes Lyle to him,

that he should feel so strong an interest in her? Ay, what indeed? he asked the question seriously of his own heart; and being essentially earnest-minded himself, it received a speedy and decisive answer. She was a great deal more to him than any one but a wife should ever be. Under such circumstances, two courses only were open to him—either he must entirely give up his present familiar intercourse with her, or take the first opportunity of declaring his real sentiments. He chose the latter course, and while waiting for a seasonable time, fondly indulged in anticipations of what she would soon become under such influence as he hoped to subject her to—in short, under Anglican training. He little knew the double blow he was preparing for himself.

It was a few days before her intended departure, and they were walking together in the garden. Earnestly, but very calmly, Arthur Stanley spoke to her of the affection he could no longer conceal. What! was she about to walk silently by his side, and let him pour out words of love to the affianced bride of another?

“Agnes, will you not speak one word?” he said at last; “only tell me I am not giving you pain.”

She stopped suddenly and tried to speak, but the effort was beyond her. She struggled hard, but it was no use, nature would not be controlled; and leaning against a tree for support, she burst into tears.

Perplexed and dismayed beyond measure at the effect of his words, he entreated her not to

distress herself; if she could never love him, only to tell him so plainly, and he would never annoy or trouble her again.

Poor Agnes! she had no strength for acting a part now, and involuntarily the words burst from her,

"I do love you." Then suddenly rousing herself, she looked steadily at him, and said slowly, "Arthur, I have deceived you—I am engaged to another; in pity forgive me and—leave me."

Thought for others ever came before thought for self in Arthur Stanley's mind; and repressing with a strong hand his own suffering, he said gently, very gently, for he knew he was applying the knife to the wound, but he knew also that it must be done,

"Did you love this other, Agnes?"

Fiercely, passionately, the long-pent-up agony burst forth. "I hate and loathe him with my whole heart and soul."

"Then you cannot marry him," said Arthur, in a quiet, firm tone.

"I can, I *will*!" exclaimed Agnes; "my word is passed, the day is fixed, I cannot draw back—it would be false, dishonourable, untruthful. I have promised; I *must* fulfil it, I cannot break my word."

He saw there was but one ground to take, and he took it at once. "Listen, Agnes," he said, calmly; "you are going, then, to promise solemnly to God that you will during all your life *love* truly and faithfully one whom you loathe and hate. Do you think you can keep *that* promise?"

and if not, would you rather break a promise to God than a promise to man? You are under no vow to marry this man; but if you do marry him, you will be under a vow to be faithful to him in *thought* as much as in act."

He stopped, feeling he had said as much as he dared. Agnes looked frightened, bewildered.

"God must help me to keep it, then," she said, "for I *must* make it."

"God will *not* help you to keep it, if it is a lie to begin with," replied Mr. Stanley, sternly; "if you want to be faithful to a lie, you must ask the devil and not God to help you."

It grieved him to the heart to speak so severely, but he was thankful to see that he had at last terrified her.

In a subdued tone she said,

"What must I do, Arthur?"

"Break off this engagement," he replied, "at once, this very day; never mind any consequences."

"And then?"

"And then you will be free."

"No, no, Arthur," she said, stung with a keen sense of shame and remorse. "It will be enough if I am spared this hateful marriage, enough to be spared misery. I cannot ask for happiness; do not speak of it, do not think of it."

He was far too generous to speak of himself at such a moment; and not another word was said as they returned together to the house.

## CHAPTER XVI.

O take the light away from earth ;  
Take all that men can love from me ;  
Let all I lean upon give way,  
That I may lean on nought but Thee !

F. W. FABER.

AGNES sought neither counsel nor sympathy. With a wild unreasoning dread of the slightest delay, she wrote that same afternoon to Mr. Bentick, saying in cold, calm words, that, finding it impossible to love him, she thought it better to ask him to release her from her engagement. She then quietly went down to Mrs. Stanley, and told her that circumstances had occurred which made it necessary for her to return home the next day. But the hardest part still remained : she must speak to Arthur once more ; she was not afraid of *him*, she knew she could trust to his generosity ; but she greatly feared her own weakness, and was therefore anxious that the interview should be as brief as possible.

That evening afforded no opportunity for it ; but the next morning, after breakfast, he followed her into the garden.

Abruptly, bluntly, as if afraid to trust herself with more words than were absolutely necessary, she said,

"I have written to Mr. Bentick."

"Thank God !" he replied ; "then you are free ?"

"You forget," she said slowly, as if repeating

a task she had half forgotten : " perhaps he will refuse to release me ; he may insist. I suppose he has a right."

" Is he a brute ?" interrupted Mr. Stanley impatiently.

She had never seen him impatient or passionate before ; it frightened her a little.

" I don't know what he is," she answered ; " but I have behaved very ill to him, and he has a right to resent it. And my father too, he will be very angry ; perhaps *he* will insist on my marrying him."

" He cannot, he *dare* not," replied Mr. Stanley impetuously ; " no one can force you against your own will ; even that heartless thing the law will protect you against that."

" It may be my duty to sacrifice myself," she said absently, as if speaking more to herself than to him.

" To God, perhaps, but never to man," he replied solemnly ; " only a heathen could do that."

She turned to him, and said, resolutely and calmly,

" Arthur, you have taught me that there is something better and higher to live for than earthly happiness. Do not quarrel with me if I try to put your lesson into practice. Cannot you practise it yourself ?"

" Do not let us speak now of the future," he replied, " the present is sufficient ; only promise me that you will be firm—that you will let no mistaken sense of duty persuade you to renew this engagement."



"O no, no; it would be impossible," she said in a tone which quite satisfied him on that point.

As Agnes had expected, her father was at first extremely angry; but her humble and evidently sincere acknowledgment that she felt herself fully as much to blame as he could think her, and the pain she was only too clearly suffering, soon softened him; she had always been a spoiled child, and he could not now find it in his heart to be hard upon her.

But with Mr. Bentick the case was very different: he had perhaps as much affection for Agnes as his nature was capable of; but it was a low, selfish, animal nature, and when he received the letter telling him he had lost her for ever, he felt more like a wild beast cheated of its prey than a human being. He wrote no answer, but went himself and demanded an interview with Agnes. She would gladly have refused it, but her father urged her; and with a feeling that it was a kind of penance she had justly deserved, she went down to him.

"Miss Lyle," he said, "you have asked me to release you from your engagement to me. You wish, I suppose, to settle the matter quietly between ourselves? On one condition I am willing to do so. Will you accept it?"

"Let me hear it first," she replied, utterly confounded at his cool impertinence.

"You had better accept it," he said, in a bitter tone; "you might find the alternative worse. Take care, Agnes; it is dangerous to provoke an injured man. Do you consent?"

She was terrified, though less at his words than at the look that accompanied them.

"I will consent to anything," she replied, "that I may with honour. What is to be the price of my release?"

"*Honour*," he repeated, "and *price*! You are haughty, Agnes; but do not be afraid, I will require nothing that the most fastidious honour could object to. I only ask you never to marry till you know that I have done so."

"What!" exclaimed Agnes, naturally scarcely believing it possible that she could have heard rightly.

He repeated the words in a distinct formal tone, and added, "Promise me this, and I will never molest you again; but if you refuse——"

"What if I refuse?" she asked.

"A revenge that shall make your very existence a burden to you."

Agnes looked up; his expression terrified her, and she said,

"I do promise; and may God forgive you!"

"Thank you," he replied, in a contemptuous tone; for in his heart he despised her for yielding to his tyranny.

He was in good spirits, however, for he had won five thousand pounds, and he returned to London congratulating himself that he had not been made a fool of for nothing. When he had first received Agnes's letter his anger knew no bounds. For the last six weeks he had been envied by all his friends as "the luckiest dog in town," to have won the greatest beauty of the season and an heiress into the bargain, and

now to have to own himself jilted was a mortification quite beyond his powers of endurance. Accordingly he had consulted a friend, who at first, merely in joke, advised him to take the unmanly vengeance recorded above.

"By Jove, I will! it would serve her right," he replied.

"Nonsense, I was not speaking seriously," his friend answered; "you dare not use such language to a lady."

"I tell you I dare, and I will," he replied. "Will you bet me five thousand pounds I extort that promise from her before to-morrow night?"

The bet was accepted, and without allowing time for his passion to cool, Mr. Bentick won it in the manner we have described.

Agnes wrote immediately to Arthur Stanley, telling him briefly what had occurred, without adding a single word to the bare facts; for she felt too much confused and bewildered to know whether she had acted rightly or wrongly, wisely or unwisely. Mr. Stanley's first impulse was to go in search of Mr. Bentick with a good-sized horsewhip; but his second was that he might do Agnes more harm than good by interfering, and he abstained accordingly. He wrote to her without a word of reproach. He was far too generous even to hint that she had no right to give a promise that involved another's happiness as well as her own; and indeed his chief distress in the now necessary cessation of their intercourse was, that he could no longer help her, as he had hoped to do, in her religious difficulties. He little thought how this very separation from

him would help her far more than his teaching could have done, and lead her far more quickly into the truth.

One sentence of his letter Agnes treasured up in her heart; he little thought how far beyond his own meaning it would lead her. It was this: "I entreat you never to rest satisfied till you have learnt practically all the blessings which the Catholic Church offers to her children."

It was not to be wondered at that the events of the last few weeks affected Agnes Lyle's health: at first she merely became languid, losing her spirits and appetite; but gradually she sank into a state of morbid depression, very distressing to those about her; she scarcely moved or spoke the whole day, and seemed not only perfectly indifferent to everything going on around her, but almost unconscious of it. Becoming at last seriously uneasy, her mother took her to London to consult a physician.

Agnes merely said, "It is no use; there is nothing the matter with me;" but she made no further objection. She took everything that happened, or that was done to her, passively.

Happily the physician they fixed upon was both wise and honest: he saw at once that the case was one entirely beyond his skill—that all her seeming indifference and apathy were but a veil assumed to conceal the workings of some terrible mental conflict, wholly out of the reach of any remedies he could suggest. He asked to speak to Agnes alone for a few minutes.

"You must forgive me if I am taking a liberty," he said to her, "but I am anxious to

give you the best advice in my power ; and I wish to ask you a question that you would perhaps prefer answering me confidentially."

Agnes merely raised her eyes languidly to his face.

"You have some great trouble or anxiety preying upon your mind ; do you speak of it to *no one* ?"

She started and shuddered ; but the question roused her, and she said with a faint smile, "Surely that question is hardly within your province ?"

"Pardon me," he replied, "I am very sorry to have distressed you ; I only wished to say that nothing so much weakens all the physical powers as any overstrain on the mind, and I am sure this is the case with you. Will you not allow me, as a friend rather than as a physician, to advise you to seek the relief of some counsel or sympathy ?"

He spoke so kindly that she could not be angry ; but she only replied, "Thank you very much, but it is impossible."

"You would not say that if you were a Catholic," replied the doctor, his compassion having quite got the better of his prudence. The moment, however, he had said the words he regretted having done so, for Agnes trembled from head to foot, and with an evident effort to remain calm, said,

"I think we had better not enter upon that subject ; but do not think me ungrateful for your advice because I am not able to follow it. I suppose I need not detain you longer now ?"

"Perhaps you may be better able to follow my next recommendation," he said, smiling. "Have you any objection to spending a short time abroad—in Brittany for instance? both the country and the people are interesting."

"If you wish it," she replied in a tone of perfect indifference.

And so it was decided that they were to go for a few weeks into Brittany.

Little or no benefit, however, seemed at first likely to ensue. Agnes lay all day on her couch, as listlessly as ever; the only difference was that she seemed rather to enjoy having it drawn to the open window, and looking out upon the country, watching the peasants, and listening to their conversation, especially on a Sunday or fête-day, when their bright and rather peculiar holiday costumes seemed to amuse her. Sometimes, too, a strange smile would light up her face, as she overheard pitying comments on the lovely English girl, who always looks so ill and so sad. Agnes thought she had done for ever with any pleasure to be derived from homage to her beauty; but to her own surprise and self-reproach, she found a certain gratification stealing over her, as she noticed how many eyes were turned towards her, though never with a vulgar or impertinent gaze. One day—it was a festival—a procession of our Blessed Lady passed her window: children with white frocks and veils strewed flowers along the path; then followed the image of our Lady under a canopy, borne by four young peasant girls; behind this walked the curé of the village, and

some Sisters of Charity from a neighbouring convent followed. Agnes noticed a quick glance from one of the bearers of the canopy, and the priest towards whom it was directed, turned for a moment, and raised his eyes to her face, but they were instantly averted with a slight, and to all appearance not very complimentary, shrug of the shoulders, which, however, with true French politeness, he immediately converted into an attempt to adjust his cope, which had slipped a little out of place.

"At last!" exclaimed a boy to his sister, with a merry laugh, and clapping his hands.

"For shame, Antony!" she replied gravely; "don't you know how much he has prayed for her?"

Agnes had seen and heard all. In her morbid sensitiveness she had interpreted the priest's gesture as implying disgust at herself as a heretic, and the girl's words startled her; what on earth could induce a perfect stranger to feel such an interest in her as to pray for her? Poor Agnes knew little enough about the love of souls, and with her strong English prejudices she felt half inclined to resent any such interest as an interference, an intrusion. She felt rather frightened too, as Protestants always do at the prayers of Catholics, as if they had a secret consciousness of their power. But at all events it was pleasant to know that the shrug (she was far too keen-sighted to attribute it to any misdemeanour on the part of the cope) was not one of contempt. Perhaps he was annoyed with himself for his voluntary distraction—perhaps he

had broken a vow by looking at her. Agnes had vanity enough left to blush at the suggestion. The procession was closed by some Sisters of St. Vincent of Paul. One of these turned a young, bright, joyous face upon Agnes, softening as it looked upon her into an expression of such deep compassion and sympathy, that she could not help wishing she were more of an invalid, and could ask the pretty Sister's good offices as a nurse.

Perhaps some such idea had passed through the mind of the young religious herself, for the next day, when Agnes came as usual to her couch, she found on the table beside it a vase filled with the most delicious flowers.

"Where did these come from?" she asked her maid in some surprise.

"Indeed, ma'am, I don't know as I ought to have put them here," replied that individual rather gravely, "for one o' them Popish nuns gave them to the cook for you, as she came home from Mass this morning."

"How very kind of her!" exclaimed Agnes, tears coming into her eyes at even so slight a mark of sympathy. Human affection was *life* to Agnes, and she was wasting away for want of it.

"Them Papists is a deal *too* kind," replied the maid, with a significant shake of her head. "There's the baker—he's a decent young man enough, for the matter of that; but he's been and half-ruined hisself a-paying for Masses for my conversion, because he won't marry a Pro-



testant. As if I should thank him for wasting his money on that nonsense !”

Agnes could scarcely repress a smile at her attendant's estimate of the relative value of money and souls, as she replied,

“No doubt you would have preferred his buying you a new bonnet and shawl. But seriously, Anne, I hope you do not think of changing your religion for the sake of a husband.”

Anne drew herself up with an air of supreme contempt, saying,

“Not I indeed, ma'am. I tells him if *he* won't marry a Protestant, *I* won't marry a Papist; so I'm even with him there. But O dear! ma'am, what's the matter? Are you ill?” For Agnes had sunk back on her couch and closed her eyes.

“No, thank you, only tired. I should like to sleep a little. You can leave me, Anne.”

Her conscience smote her a little for dismissing her maid with a falsehood; for she had no intention whatever of sleeping; but it was true enough that she was tired, wearied,—not in body, but in mind; those few words spoken under her window the day before, “Do you not know how much he has prayed for her?” had haunted her ever since; and not quite pleasantly. She had all the prejudices of an Englishwoman and a Protestant, and it annoyed her to be noticed in any way by a stranger. What business was it of his to pray for her? It was an intrusion; it was putting her under a disagreeable involuntary obligation. Edith would have resented it as an impertinence; but Agnes had none of this

sort of pride; she only felt her delicacy wounded at an unwarrantable interference in her private affairs. And now another stranger had come forward still more openly, but less intrusively—at least so Agnes thought; but still she asked herself, “*Why* should these people trouble themselves about *me*?”

And then all manner of strange stories that she had heard about the “Jesuitical manoeuvres” of Catholics to make converts came into her mind. She did not exactly either believe or disbelieve them; but she believed the main fact that Catholics always *were* anxious to make converts. *Why*? Was it mere love of talking, of argument? Was it a sort of jealousy of the greater freedom from restraint enjoyed under other religions that made them selfishly wish to see others under the same yoke as themselves? Were they bound by some secret vow or under some dreadful penalty to promote the interests of their Church by increasing the number of its members? Or was it really, simply, and sincerely that, believing they alone possessed the true faith, they were anxious to save souls by bringing them into it?

After perplexing herself for some time with these and similar thoughts, she made a kind of desperate resolution to “know the worst of it.” The sweet face of the young Sister of Charity had haunted her since the day before. With the sort of morbid craving peculiar to persons suffering from any nervous disorder, she longed to know if it were she who had sent the flowers; and finally she determined to put an end to all

doubt on the subject by sending for the cook and desiring her to tell the "nun" who had sent the flowers that she should like to thank her for them herself, and begged she would stop the next time she happened to pass the house. Having done this, she felt partly relieved and yet rather frightened. What would come of it? Well, no matter; surely she could draw back easily enough if she liked. The cook's evident delight rather annoyed her. Was it all a trick of the nuns to get an introduction to her?

"Well, be it so," thought Agnes, with something of her old love of power; "I can give them their heads and keep the reins in my own hands at the same time."



## CHAPTER XVII.

O Lord, I hear ; but can it be  
The gracious word is meant for me ?  
O Lord, I thirst ; but who shall tell  
The secrets of that living well,  
By whose waters I may rest,  
And slake this lip unblest ?

*Lyra Apostolica.*

AGNES had been right in her conjectures. The next day she saw the bright-faced young Sister of Charity whom she had noticed in the procession, timidly approaching her open window with a large bouquet of pretty flowers in her hand.

"Our Mother Superior sends them to you," she said. "Flowers are so refreshing when one

is ill, and perhaps you have been accustomed to them at your own home."

The kindness of the thought touched Agnes more than the flowers, and she affectionately pressed the visitor to come in and spend half an hour with her; this, however, was impossible without permission, and Agnes found it was quite useless to attempt persuading the religious to disobey her rule.

"Then will you ask leave to come and see me another day?" she said.

"I will," was the reply: "and meanwhile I will pray very much for you."

Agnes looked up with an expression of genuine surprise—it was so unlike anything she had ever been used to have addressed to her. What did these people mean? Did they think she was going to die? or if not, what was there in her to excite their compassion? She determined to get it all out of her new friend at their next interview; for the present, she merely said,

"Why should you take that trouble?"

"Trouble!" repeated Sœur Rosalie, as if puzzled to understand her questioner's meaning. "How can it be trouble to speak to our dear Lord?"

It was Agnes's turn to be puzzled now; this was quite a new idea of prayer to her mind, and perhaps these few words taught her something more than she had ever learned in all her life before; at all events they afforded ample food for meditation during her solitary hours that day.

Sœur Rosalie easily obtained the permission

she asked, for her motive was far higher than merely to give human sympathy; the sight of Agnes's sad, suffering face had filled her with deep compassion and an ardent longing to bring the only true healing to this poor stricken soul: not that she for a moment thought *herself* able to do this,—she was much too humble-minded; but she had prayed much for Agnes ever since the first day she had seen her. She had begged many Masses for her of the good priest; she had lately engaged the whole convent in a Novena for her conversion, and with simple childlike faith she thought the Sacred Heart must already surely be drawing to itself a soul for whom so many holy prayers were offered, and she longed to be able to speak to Agnes of all the blessings she was so confident would soon be within her reach.

It was a grievous disappointment to her at first to find how very little appearance there was of her hopes being realized, and she had to submit to several severe reproofs from her superiors for her want of faith in not trusting God to work His own will in His own time.

Agnes, it is true, asked plenty of questions, but they were as yet, apparently, merely put out of curiosity, or at best out of a desire for some more intellectual conversation than the society of her parents generally afforded her. The moment poor little Sœur Rosalie said a word about the privileges which only Catholics could enjoy, she found herself repulsed. Agnes would say coldly,

“ You know nothing about the Church of

England, and therefore you are no judge ;” or, “I do not want to be *bribed* out of my religion.”

She little thought how much more interest Agnes felt than she cared to show ; how much influence she was quietly and unconsciously gaining over her.

One day Agnes said abruptly to her,

“How far is it to the church ? I should like to go there.”

Sœur Rosalie’s heart bounded with delight, as she exclaimed,

“O, I am so glad ! you will come then to worship our dear Lord at last ?”

It was not, perhaps, the wisest thing she could have said, for it certainly reflected rather unpleasantly upon Agnes’s practical devotion up to that period ; but Sœur Rosalie had more of the dove’s simplicity than the serpent’s wisdom in her character ; perhaps this was all the better for Agnes, it made the contrast between them more striking. The immediate result, however, was that Agnes laughed, and said,

“Why, you are like a Scotch person ; you ask me another question instead of answering mine.”

“O, I forget—yes—I beg your pardon : it is not more than half a mile to the church. Can you walk so far ?”

A few days ago Agnes would have declared she could not walk a quarter of that distance, but she was just now under the influence of a strong excitement. She was determined to get to the church, be the difficulties what they might,

and she did not choose to betray her intention to a servant by employing her Bath-chair.

"Yes, I think so," she said; "you see I have, not been at church for so long, I am getting quite a heathen. I think it would refresh me; and I suppose your church is always open?" All which was a mere blind to conceal her real feeling.

"Always, except for a short time in the middle of the day; and our Lord is always there to listen to all who come, and to comfort them."

Agnes fixed her eyes very earnestly upon her companion, and for the first time let a few words come from the depth of her heart.

"You have told me this so often that I almost believe it, and I want to try; for I can never speak to any one else. But I am afraid He will be angry with me."

This gave Sœur Rosalie exactly the opportunity she had long watched for in vain, and she seized it eagerly.

"*Why* are you afraid?" she asked gently.

Agnes started, and put her hand suddenly to her head, as if in pain. It reminded her of the question Arthur Stanley had asked her when she told him she could never go to Communion again if she believed as he did. She replied, however, without hesitation,

"Because I have been very wicked."

Sœur Rosalie looked at the beautiful delicate-looking girl by her side, and could not find it in her heart to believe that she had been "very wicked;" but she remembered the proverb, "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain," and

could easily imagine that Agnes's beauty had been in some way a snare to her.

"Ah yes," she said, "that must be great misery without the Sacrament of Penance."

"Without what?" exclaimed Agnes suddenly. She could not but remember how unsatisfactorily Mr. Stanley had met this difficulty, and longed to know what better the young religious could suggest. Briefly but clearly she explained to her the Sacrament of Penance; and Agnes instinctively felt that so merciful an ordinance was no human invention, but *could* only have come from Divine love and compassion. But there was no time then for further conversation, and Agnes was left to her own thoughts.

The Sacrament of Penance! Yes, that was what she wanted; and how was she to get it? Did her own communion offer it to her? She had a vague recollection of something she had heard read in the church she went to with the Stanleys, and how, turning over the leaves of her Prayer-book, she had found indeed an invitation, somewhat ambiguously expressed, but still distinctly enough offering "the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice," to any one who chose to come and ask for it; and she recollected now various allusions and mysterious hints dropped occasionally both in sermons and in conversations which were quite unintelligible to her at the time, but which, putting them now all together, she soon felt convinced referred to this subject, and implied that confession of some sort, in some way, was practised among Anglicans. But, then, why all this mystery about



it? Why was it kept only for the initiated? Why were those who most needed it defrauded of their right? Why, in short, was it not openly acknowledged, openly taught, fearlessly practised? How could any Church possessing this sacrament *dare* to keep it back from her members?

Agnes's first impulse was to write to Mr. Stanley, asking all these questions and a great many more; and she so far obeyed it that she actually did write; but before finishing her letter she paused. Was it right, was it safe, to recommence an intercourse of such deep interest under their present circumstances, with their present feelings towards each other? Even if she could trust herself (and she knew well enough she could not), had she any right to throw such a temptation in *his* way? Agnes did not take long to decide. The ink had hardly dried upon her paper before she took her letter, and throwing it into the fire, quietly watched till it was quite burnt. *That* would not do at all events; she must find some other means of satisfying herself. Her father was a clergyman, but she instinctively felt that it would be quite useless to apply to him for any theological information. She did not know a single High Church clergyman except the incumbent of Mr. Stanley's parish; and he was not a person in whom she felt inclined to place confidence. Moreover, Mr. Stanley was sure to hear of it if she wrote to him; that would not do either. After revolving all sorts of schemes in her mind, she at last came to the conclusion that the only way was for her to return to

England, and seek instruction from some one amongst the leaders of the high Anglican movement.

The next time Sœur Rosalie came to see her she told her this, to the good little nun's unfeigned astonishment.

"But they are Protestants; they have no sacraments," she said; "how can they? There are no sacraments out of the Church."

"But why should not one Church have them as well as another?" Poor Agnes was no theologian.

Sœur Rosalie opened her eyes wide with amazement. She had no idea that any Protestant body ventured to call itself a Church.

"I do not understand you," she said; "there is only one Church. How could there possibly be more?"

"But as a matter of fact, there *are* more," replied Agnes. "The Church of England *exists*, whether it is good or bad."

Sœur Rosalie was puzzled what to say. She had never heard of the Church of England in her life; and though of course she knew there *could* be no true Church out of communion with Rome, she was at a loss how to explain this satisfactorily to a Protestant.

"What do you mean by the Church of England?" she asked.

It was Agnes's turn to be puzzled now. She had learnt enough at the Stanleys' to be aware that Anglicans claimed to be in some way Catholics, and rested this claim on a supposed union of some kind with Rome; but her Anglican

education had been left very incomplete, and practically she knew only just enough to bewilder her. She had no mind to give in, however. Arthur Stanley believed the English Church to possess all the attributes of a true Church, be these what they might. Surely he must know better than she did; and surely he meant *something* by that last entreaty, never to rest till she had found all the privileges which the Catholic Church offered to her children,—in short, her faith was that so graphically described by Tennyson: “I cannot *understand*, I *love*.” With an awkward consciousness that she did not comprehend her own words, she said,

“I mean the English Catholic Church, reformed from—” *Romish abuses*, she was going to add, but stopped herself just in time, and said, “all errors.”

“Dear lady, that is nonsense,” said Sœur Rosalie, bravely. *She*, at least, was not going to sacrifice truth to politeness. “There is no Catholic Church but the Roman, and it never had any errors.”

“Never had any errors!” repeated Agnes, looking at her companion as though it was impossible for any one in their senses to have made so outrageous a statement, and too entirely astonished at it to attempt any further reply.

Sœur Rosalie only smiled—but it was a smile of love and compassion, not of any consciousness of superiority—as she said,

“Do you think, then, that God can teach error?”

"But the Church is not God," replied Agnes.

"But the Church teaches nothing except by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost is God," answered Sœur Rosalie gently and very firmly.

"You mean the Church of Rome?"

"There is no other."

Agnes sank back upon her couch and closed her eyes, as she had done before when her maid spoke to her. Sœur Rosalie arranged the cushions, and made her thoroughly comfortable in a way that those only know how to do who are accustomed to sickness, saying as she did so, with the merry laugh that had first attracted Agnes,

"I see I must exercise my authority as a nurse. I have talked longer than is good for you already, and now you must be quite quiet for an hour, and not speak to any one; will you be obedient?"

"O, it is nothing, thank you, only I am not strong, and get easily tired," replied Agnes, unwilling to let her visitor discover that anything in the conversation had affected her. If Sœur Rosalie did discover it, she kept her own counsel, merely saying,

"I see; and, therefore, you must not try to walk to the church by yourself. I will come and see you to-morrow, and then, if you are inclined, we can go together."

"Thank you," said Agnes; but she spoke wearily, and Sœur Rosalie's loving heart reproached her with having perhaps been inconsiderate and rough.

"You must always tell me when you are tired,

and send me away," she said. "Now goodbye, and pray for me, as I will for you."

Agnes took the hand that was held out to her in both her own, and kissed it affectionately, regardless at the moment of the fact that tears fell upon it as she did so. She was of a demonstrative nature, and too unused to self-control to practise it easily; but she made no spoken reply to *Sœur Rosalie's* farewell.

"Keep quite quiet for an hour, and not speak to any one." Yes, she was obedient enough outwardly to this injunction, but the quietness was only external; mentally, she was drawing a laboured and painful comparison between this conversation and those she had held with Arthur Stanley. *He* had always seemed uncertain, hesitating, or at all events shy of coming to any definite point, or asserting any definite truth; and yet he was a man highly educated, well read, thoroughly informed on all subjects generally considered most important in forming the judgment; and here was a young girl, very simple, very ignorant, and yet evidently not foolish, not credulous—not one who would be likely to make a slave of her reason, but nevertheless speaking with a certainty that seemed to scorn questioning, on points she could never have studied and ascertained for herself. How clear, decided, even stern those words were: "There is only one Church; it never had any errors"! How uncompromising was her reply to Agnes's question whether she meant the Church of Rome: "There is no other"! How wanting in humility, sup-

posing there were room for any difference of opinion on the subject! Would it not have been more modest, more charitable, if she had said, "I know of no other;" or even, "I believe in no other"? But no; gentle and humble as the young religious evidently was, on this point she spoke as dogmatically as St. Bonaventure or St. Thomas could have done; unhesitatingly, firmly, she had replied, "There is no other." Agnes instinctively felt that Sœur Rosalie would suffer martyrdom rather than retract or qualify those words. And whence came this perfect certainty, this clear faith? Of this too she had spoken unreservedly: "The Church speaks by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost is God." Yes, truly, if the Church of Rome were the living voice of the Holy Ghost, there could be no other, and it could not err. Sœur Rosalie had good foundation for her certainty; but from this point of view where were all other religions, all other so-called Churches? Literally, and most emphatically, *nowhere*. How could this be? How could she believe that the English Church, with its powerful establishment, its high-sounding titles, its time-honoured and unquestionably beautiful Liturgy, was but a mockery? At the bottom of her heart, too, rankled another thought: "If this were true, Arthur Stanley would believe it. He does not; and he must know better than Sœur Rosalie." Alas, alas for the hearts that lean upon human guides in matters of faith! But Agnes truly and conscientiously thought she was bound to

ascertain the grounds of faith in her own communion before listening to those of another, although that other claimed to speak with the authority of God Himself.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

Mother of saints, receive thy sinful son !  
I crave thine absolution ere I die !

*Sir Launcelot.*

AGNES scarcely knew herself what motive prompted her to go and visit the church. She felt like a blind person groping about helplessly to find some support, and ready to grasp anything that came within her reach. She had some vague feeling that perhaps she might be able to pray better in a Catholic church ; at all events she would try, and therefore the next morning Sœur Rosalie found her not only prepared, but eager to go with her. She yearned, with the longing of a desolate heart, to throw herself upon the compassion of Him whom she believed to be in some mysterious sense present there ; and though the doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament was as a sealed book to her, she had an undefined, vague, superstitious feeling that she was *somehow* coming into the more direct presence of her Lord.

Sœur Rosalie was astonished and rather alarmed at the firm step and rapid pace of her companion ; she feared it was the excitement of

fever, and entreated her to walk more slowly, lest she should be too fatigued to return. Agnes smiled.

"Don't be afraid," she said; "it is part of my illness to be able to do things by fits and starts." It was quite true; but Sœur Rosalie did not think it a very satisfactory symptom, or feel the less anxious to get her safely home again.

"It will do Père Mérot's heart good to see you in the church," she remarked as they went; "he has said many Masses for you."

Agnes started and coloured. "Why?" she asked abruptly.

"Why?" repeated Sœur Rosalie, as if at a loss to understand what was meant by the question. "I suppose because he is always labouring for the salvation of souls."

"But why should he care for mine?" asked Agnes.

"Because our dear Lord cares for it, and died for it," was the reply.

Agnes was silent; it was a very beautiful idea, she thought, that our Lord's love for us should be a claim on the love of others—so beautiful, that she wanted to realize it thoroughly before she spoke more of it. She was frightened, however, at the thought of being seen by Père Mérot, and said she would rather wait to go into the church till he had left it.

"Are you afraid of him?" said Sœur Rosalie, laughing, the idea of being afraid of the good priest seeming quite incomprehensible to her. "He will not speak to you unless you wish it; he will be in the confessional."



"For Heaven's sake," exclaimed Agnes, "don't take me *there*; I should be frightened out of my senses!"

"No, no," replied Sœur Rosalie, "we will not go near it; we will keep at the other side of the church, if you like."

It was a small village church, very poor, and not very clean, and such decorations as it contained were not of a kind likely to please an English eye; but Agnes looked at nothing, cared for nothing; she was too much in earnest to be fastidious; and going straight towards the high altar, she knelt down, leaning her forehead upon the back of a *priedieu*. Sœur Rosalie knelt beside her. A quarter of an hour passed, half an hour, still Agnes did not move, and Sœur Rosalie began to fear she would faint; she touched her gently, and whispered, "Sit down; you will be ill." Agnes obeyed mechanically, without answering. A few moments after, Père Mérot left the confessional, and knelt near her as he passed to the sacristy. Sœur Rosalie followed him, saying to Agnes,

"Only one moment; I will be with you again directly, and then you must let me take you home, for I must return to the convent."

"Where are you going? don't leave me alone here," said Agnes, nervously.

"Will you come with me, then? I only want to speak to Père Mérot in the sacristy."

Rather to her surprise, Agnes made no difficulty, and they went together, Agnes remaining near the door while Sœur Rosalie's conference lasted; it was only a few moments. But as she turned to rejoin her, Agnes suddenly advanced a

few steps, and raising her eyes timidly to Père Mérot's face, said,

"You have had the charity to pray for me; God reward you for it."

The good priest, to whom this unexpected address was rather embarrassing, said,

"Is there anything else I can do for you, my child?"

Agnes was already faint and exhausted with the unaccustomed exercise and long kneeling; she had spoken in the excitement of overwrought feeling, and now this direct appeal completely overcame her. But for Sœur Rosalie's prompt assistance, she would have fallen senseless on the floor; as it was, by a strong effort she retained her consciousness, and after drinking some water which Père Mérot offered her, she said,

"I cannot speak to you now; another time, perhaps. Sœur Rosalie, are you ready? we had better go home."

Père Mérot had the tact not to address her again, but proposed to Sœur Rosalie to send a carriage from the village, as Agnes seemed quite unequal to the walk; but she smiled as she heard this, and said,

"Thank you, but my mother would be frightened; it will not hurt me to walk." And, seeing that she was really in earnest, they allowed her to do so.

Not a word was spoken till just as they reached the house, when Agnes stopped, and said calmly and decisively,

"I will go again to-morrow, and if Père

Mérot is at leisure, I will talk to him ; but he must be patient with me, and not startle me ; I cannot bear it."

Sœur Rosalie could hardly conceal her joy, and assured Agnes she need have no fear.

Agnes had taken a brave resolution during that short walk ; she had asked herself, " Does it not seem as if God were sending me help and consolation through the Church of Rome ? Why should I refuse it ? " and she had answered herself, " I will not refuse it ; I will at least make trial of it."

The next morning she dispensed with the usual attendance of her maid, and astonished the man who always drew her chair by desiring to be taken to the church, and fetched again from thence in an hour.

" There now ! " he said to himself. " I always thought English people were infidels."

Père Mérot was sitting near a side-altar saying his office when Agnes entered ; but he was watching for her, for Sœur Rosalie had told him of her intention, and also of her fear, though this was hardly necessary, for the good priest was gentleness itself. Seeing that he was engaged, Agnes passed on to the high altar and knelt before it.

Père Mérot thought she was praying for light and truth, and the grace of conversion, and said a Hail Mary for her intention ; perhaps he might have been a little scandalized if he had known that the only thing she felt able at that moment to ask for was the sheer physical power of speech, necessary for her interview with him.

And yet no,—for he would have had charity enough to feel compassion for even such weakness as that.

She watched him go into the sacristy and followed him. Without giving him time to address her, she said,

“I am very sorry if I seemed rude to you yesterday; will you forgive me? And tell me now what consolations your Church allows you to offer to a heretic, for as such I know you look upon me.”

Père Mérot looked up in unfeigned surprise. It seemed impossible to him that Agnes could have seriously supposed that she could share Catholic privileges as a Protestant. Agnes’s quick sensitiveness saw and misinterpreted the look before he had time to speak, and she said very humbly,

“I am afraid I misunderstood you yesterday, or perhaps your kind impulse led you to offer more than you are able to give; and yet” (it rose involuntarily to her lips, she could not help saying it), “the children’s bread was *once* thrown to a dog. Can you not——”

“Stop, stop, my child!” broke in the good priest, much distressed at this appeal; “you have mistaken me indeed, but not in the way you imagine. Any comfort or counsel I can give is freely yours, if you will only so far place confidence in me as to tell me your trouble.”

“Then,” said Agnes, who had fully made up her mind as to what she really wanted and what she intended to do, “can you give me absolution if I make a confession to you?”

He was silent for a few moments, not, of course, from any hesitation as to the answer to that question *per se*, but thinking how he could best explain to her the necessity for his refusal, so as to draw her towards the Church rather than, as he feared might be the case, repel her from it by a seeming unkindness. He did not hesitate long, however, and Agnes must have been prejudiced indeed if she had found anything but love and sympathy in every word he said.

"I understand," she said at last, "I understand quite now ; thank you very much for taking so much trouble with me. But you will give me a little time to think, will you not, before you require an answer?"

"Surely," he replied, "as long as you like ; but *thinking* will help you very little, my child ; *pray* instead of thinking, and meanwhile come and talk to me whenever you like ; you will always find me here at this hour."

It would have been well if Agnes had followed this advice literally, but perhaps it was hardly possible for her to avoid thinking ; at all events, she *did* think for hours and hours together, till her brain got confused and bewildered, and the more she tried to pray, the less she was able. Père Mérot, whom she saw frequently, did not attempt to hurry her decision, though he was careful to show her plainly the sin and danger of trifling with her convictions. But Agnes would always reply,

"I am *not* convinced yet ; I am not sure."

Père Mérot could not understand it, or rather

he did understand enough to make him very anxious ; it was quite plain that her reason and intellect were fully convinced, and that she was deceiving herself in some way (he did not for a moment think she was deceiving *him*) as to the real state of her mind. There was some impediment to the free action of her conscience, something he would never be able to reach through ordinary intercourse, unless Agnes became much more unreserved than she had as yet shown herself disposed to be ; for though she had told him quite freely her religious perplexities themselves, she had never given the slightest hint as to the causes which had led her to take any interest in the subject at all after the utter indifference of her early life ; and Père Mérot's experience as a confessor soon made him understand, better perhaps than Agnes did herself, that some secret influence was at work. It was true enough ; for though Agnes never exactly put it before her mind in a definite form, the *under-current* of her thoughts always was, " Arthur Stanley is holy, he is truthful, he is clever ; if this were really God's truth, *he* would have known it, *he* would have been a Catholic ; he is *not*, and *therefore*——" But if she ever got as far as this in plain words to herself, she left the sentence unfinished there.

Meanwhile her parents, naturally enough, were by no means pleased at the aspect of affairs ; for though they did not know the full extent of her intercourse with Père Mérot, they saw quite enough to make them uneasy. And yet they had refrained from any interference, being at first only too thankful to see their child more

cheerful, and evidently stronger, to quarrel with the means.

One evening, however, Mr. Lyle suddenly proposed returning home soon, greatly to Agnes's dismay, and she begged for a little delay; but her father replied, rather seriously,

"No, Agnes; your pretty little friend Sœur Rosalie will be making a Papist of you, and I don't want that, though I don't wonder at your liking *her*,—she is a charming creature, and much too pretty for a nun; but what on earth you find to interest you in that stupid old priest I can't conceive; he does not even look like a gentleman."

Agnes felt unspeakably grateful for Père Mérot's age and appearance, for the tone of her father's remark annoyed her extremely; but she replied with some warmth,

"He speaks and acts like a gentleman, at all events."

"So much the worse," muttered Mr. Lyle.

Agnes felt that the crisis was come now: unless she could make up her mind to be a Catholic at once, it would never do to urge a longer stay at Falaix; her father's remarks made her feel strongly inclined to become one out of sheer perversity; but she had conscience enough to reject that temptation, and ask herself the question honestly,—or as she *believed* honestly. But she could not make up her mind; she still hankered after the idea that she ought to hear what the teachers of her own communion had to say for themselves before she renounced it, or at least she *thought* this was her motive; and

she went to see Père Mérot with great reluctance, for she knew it would grieve him deeply to part from her as a Protestant ; she even half wished he would put an end to her scruples by insisting on receiving her in spite of herself.

He heard her, as he always did, quietly and patiently ; and when she had quite finished all she had to say, he asked her under whose instruction she meant to place herself in England. Agnes started ; the question, simple as it was, was one she had not, as yet, asked herself.

"I don't know," she replied ; "I know no one ; I don't even know, as yet, how to get an introduction to any clergyman holding the opinions I have spoken of to you."

"You learnt them yourself from books, then ?"

The quick flush that mounted to Agnes's forehead was answer enough for him ; and he spared her the necessity of giving any other, by continuing at once, as if he had not noticed it,

"Believe me, my child, their words will satisfy you as little as their writings, probably even less ; for you will find they relax in practice much that they profess in theory. I am not speaking at random ; I have spent some months in England, and often been in the society of what are called High Churchmen. There is no one, then" (he spoke rather abruptly this time, for he felt sure of his ground), "whom you would especially choose as a confessor ?"

He had touched the right chord, and he knew it ; he knew that her delicate sensitive nature would never bear the pain of confession unless *driven* to it by a strong feeling of duty and ne-



cessity ; and that any misgiving as to the reality of the act she was performing would destroy her power to perform it at all. She clasped her hands tightly together, and, unable to control herself any longer, said,

“ O father, it is hard, it is cruel of you not to hear me yourself.”

“ My child,” he said, “ I will hear you gladly, but you know there is only one condition on which I can give you absolution.”

There was a silence of some moments ; then Agnes said,

“ If you knew all, you could at least advise me, and perhaps I should be better able to decide—to see whether I ought to be a Catholic at once. Can you hear me on these terms ? Of course, I know you cannot give me absolution.”

Père Mérot did not hesitate or scruple ; he felt no doubt now of the issue.

And Agnes felt no doubt when she left the church an hour afterwards, with the resolution to return the next day and make her act of submission before receiving absolution. She had no time to lose, for they were to leave Falaix the day but one after. Like all cowards, she had put off looking things fairly in the face till the last moment ; and she knew not yet how bitterly she was going to be taught the danger of such delay.

## CHAPTER XIX.

O, pray for me ! thou know'st what prayers I need ;  
What is it to be one in whose weak heart  
Two faiths are lodged, while thought and feeling bleed  
In the wild war, yet neither will depart ?

F. W. FABER.

IN her weak state, and especially with an illness so entirely on the nerves, it was hardly to be expected that Agnes would not suffer considerably from all she had just gone through ; and if she reckoned upon the fever of excitement or any supernatural strength to carry her through the next day, she was disappointed. Not only was it quite out of her power to go to church, but she was too ill even to leave her bed. At first in her distress at this she resolved to tell her father everything, and to insist on his either sending at once for Père Mérot or delaying their departure till she was able to be received into the Church. Her conscience told her plainly enough that this would be her only honest course ; but—partly from physical weakness, partly from the lack of moral courage, which was one of the chief faults of her character—she put it off from hour to hour, and as a natural consequence gradually suffered subtle temptations to insinuate themselves into her mind, till at last she entirely gave way to them.

It was an easy task enough for the devil first to suggest to her that she had perhaps been car-

ried away by impulse and feeling the day before, nay even by the mere desire for human sympathy ; and then to persuade her that her present illness was sent as a warning, a providential hindrance to the accomplishment of her purpose, as a token that she had been right in wishing to consult the authorities of her own communion before taking the decided step of leaving it ; that evidently it was not God's intention for her to keep her engagement with Père Mérot,—therefore it was not His intention that she should be a Catholic ; that she had been on the brink of a great danger, and He was interposing to rescue her from it. All this was very specious, very fair-seeming ; it betrayed no trace of the cloven foot : must we accuse poor Agnes of wilful rejection of grace in yielding to it ? There was no one to remind her that a grace not corresponded with may be withdrawn ; that a light not followed may quickly become darkness ; that it is often God's way seemingly to raise up obstacles in a path He has once clearly pointed out for us to follow, that we may have an opportunity of showing our love and earnestness by overcoming them ; above all, there was no one to remind her that any great crisis in the spiritual life is sure to be a time of great temptation, a time when it is especially needful to look jealously and suspiciously at whatever comes to us in the guise of an inspiration, and a time in which it will be almost certainly wrong to change any determination previously made. But perhaps it will be thought, " This was hard upon Agnes ; how could she be expected to resist without any help ? " No ; God is never hard

upon any one; and she was not helpless. Père Mérot had foreseen something of this, he had warned her against it, and she did not forget his warning, only the voice speaking close to her ear was stronger, and she neglected prayer and listened to it; and that is all the devil wants: if we will only hear him, he is satisfied, for he knows we have shut out the only voice that can plead against him.

But there was still another help within her reach. In the afternoon Sœur Rosalie called, and entreated to be allowed to see her. She knew from Père Mérot what had passed, and was very anxious when she heard of her illness.

Mrs. Lyle had no wish to coerce Agnes in any way, and went herself to ask if she felt well enough to see her friend. She was much surprised at a prompt and decided refusal. Agnes had succeeded in persuading herself that she should be exposing herself to a temptation in listening to what she well knew would be the persuasions of Sœur Rosalie.

"I am sorry to say my daughter is too ill to see you," said Mrs. Lyle; "but she would like to say goodbye to you before she goes, if it would not be inconvenient to you to come to-morrow about twelve. We start at that hour."

Sœur Rosalie was greatly distressed. She did not believe, guileless as she was, that Agnes could really be too ill to see her if she were still intending to travel the next day; and being a very unconventional person, her face probably betrayed her thoughts, for Mrs. Lyle added,

"Of course, if Agnes is not better, we shall be obliged to postpone our journey."

"Indeed, I hope so," was the reply, which Mrs. Lyle thought scarcely so polite as might have been expected from a Frenchwoman.

Agnes, however, *was* better the next day; or at all events, whether better or not, she declared herself quite fit and ready for the journey. She dared not trust herself to remain longer near Père Mérot and Sœur Rosalie; she knew very well what would be the end of it: something deep down in her conscience told her she was trying, like Jonah, to escape from God, and like him would bitterly repent it; but she would not listen, she was obeying another voice now.

She did not come down till the last moment, and then found Sœur Rosalie waiting for her in the breakfast-room. She looked sadly and reproachfully at her,—or at least Agnes thought so, for the Sister of Charity was true to her name, and felt nothing but compassion. Agnes involuntarily threw her arms round her neck, saying,

"I must go. Don't ask me any questions; you would not understand. Tell Père Mérot I am very, very grateful to him, and that—that he must pray for me, and I will write to him when——"

"When you are a Catholic," interposed Sœur Rosalie, "and you will not delay—indeed you must not: see here;" and she put a letter into Agnes's hand: "Père Mérot gave me this for you; it is to a priest he knows in England, and who will be very kind to you, he says. He

begged me to say he was much grieved not to see you again, and that he will say a Mass for you every week till he hears you are received."

Agnes seized the letter, kissed Sœur Rosalie, and for a moment longed to break through all restraints, and confess herself then and there a Catholic; but Mrs. Lyle came to the door, saying,

"Come, Agnes, let me put you into the carriage; everything is ready;" and still keeping hold of Sœur Rosalie's hand, she allowed herself to be led out.

Their road did not lie through the village, so there was no chance of meeting Père Mérot. Agnes felt it a relief to know this; but she did not venture to look out at the window till they had gone some miles.

If there is one point more than another on which all spiritual writers agree, it is in distinguishing the interior suggestions of good and bad spirits by the calmness or perturbation they cause in the mind. St. Teresa especially warns us against mistaking for a divine inspiration any suggestion causing great excitement or agitation, or urging us to act hastily and impatiently, or in any way disturbing our conscience; for any divine revelation or inspiration, she says, always leaves great peace and calm in the soul; whereas agitation, disturbance, impetuosity, are always the work of the devil.

On her return home, Agnes was anxious not to let a single day, if possible, escape her; but the first thing she did was to lock up Père

Mérot's letter in a desk she scarcely ever opened. A few words addressed to herself were in the envelope containing his letter to the English priest—a short earnest entreaty that she would lose no time in delivering it herself, and a promise to pray for her. The enclosure was addressed to one of the Jesuit Fathers in England. Agnes put it resolutely from her as a temptation, in spite of a sharp twinge of conscience, warning her that she was resisting the will of God. She only just so far hesitated as to think, "I will not destroy it; it will be safe there, and then—well, I can use it at any time, if I feel inclined."

She set herself from that day forward, with a zeal and diligence truly worthy of a better cause, to read every theological work, good, bad, and indifferent, that had appeared within the last few years from the pens of the Tractarian school of writers. Holy and excellent many of them were; and it is no wonder that, while her ignorance of theology blinded her to their doctrinal errors, her craving for reality was satisfied by the high standard of holiness so uncompromisingly put forward. "Surely," she thought to herself, "Père Mérot was mistaken: the men who could so write could not be so utterly false to themselves as to be leading soft, easy, self-indulgent lives; they could not be so cruel as to offer to those who followed them what they never meant to give." And then she found means to inquire, and heard on all sides of the self-devotion of these men, of their hard-working, self-denying lives, in many cases of the persecution and con-

tempt they willingly endured for conscience sake. Then, too, she heard of the establishment of sisterhoods, where, as far as she could understand, our Lord was served as devotedly as in Catholic convents; of churches where the Anglican communion was celebrated with almost every mark of outward reverence she had noticed at Mass; of clergymen who habitually heard confessions; of persons who professed to observe strictly the "Roman rule" in regard to all the precepts of the Church; and further still, she soon discovered that amongst all these were many whose distinct, and almost avowed, object was reunion with Rome—who with their whole heart and soul worked and hoped for the return of their Church as a body, to the Roman obedience. For this party, Agnes felt the most intense sympathy. There was something noble and chivalrous in the idea that, by delaying their own individual return to unity, they were sacrificing themselves for their Church—denying themselves an immediate benefit, for the sake of extending it to the whole body of which they were members. It is true she had qualms of conscience as to the safety of such a proceeding; but she felt naturally shy of arguing the point with persons better informed than herself, and only once ventured to ask,

"Well, but suppose after all we never do get to Rome in the end? suppose we die out of unity through waiting too long for it?"

"It would be a glorious martyrdom," was the reply; "for I suppose we have just enough sacramental grace here for our salvation."



Agnes was silenced, but not exactly convinced, though she professed herself satisfied.

Happily, she met with a good deal of contradiction and mortification from her confessor, who was not prepared to go the same lengths she did herself, and perpetually worried her by forbidding some practice as "distinctively Roman," or some devotion as "uncatholic, because it was unknown during the first eight centuries." To prayers for the dead he made no objection, they were "undoubtedly the practice of the undivided Church;" the "Hail Mary" he permitted, having, in fact, no reasonable objection to offer to it, but, with a strange inconsistency, recommended her not to say it "too often, *e. g.*, not in the form of the Rosary"—a distinction which Agnes was very nearly irreverent enough to laugh at to his face. He allowed her to wear a crucifix, but not to have one exposed to view in her room, and even made no difficulty about an image of our Lady, "as it might pass merely for a work of art;" but medals or relics were his special aversion, and he insisted on her giving up to him a small medal of the Immaculate Conception which Sœur Rosalie had given her. Agnes remonstrated, and it was finally restored to her on condition of being kept "only as a remembrance of her friend." He allowed weekly confession, but did not encourage it, saying that it was "taking too sacramental a view of the ordinance."

"But I do look upon it as a sacrament," replied Agnes one day, after having submitted

silently to this reproof for about a year. "Do you mean to say it is not?"

"Of course not, or it would be necessary to salvation."

This was a sore point with Agnes : no wonder. The recollection of that unabsolved confession to Père Mérot stuck like a thorn in her heart. She said,

"And how can we know it is not necessary to salvation? The Church of Rome says it is."

"And the Church of England says it is not. What right have *you* to question the decision of your own Church?"

Naturally enough, he was annoyed at the pertinacity with which Agnes constantly appealed to the authority of the Church of Rome.

"I don't understand," replied Agnes, meekly, "how any decision can be of faith, unless it is infallible."

Good Mr. Nugent felt inclined to wish his troublesome penitent fairly off his hands ; but he was a conscientious and very unselfish man, and would not for the world have been guilty of the least neglect towards one whom he considered as committed to his care ; and he replied patiently enough,

"Of course I cannot say that it is *of faith* ; no decision of any branch of the Church, made since the division of East and West, can be infallible, because visible unity is necessary to infallibility, and visible unity is broken ; but I think it is cherishing an unloving and an undutiful spirit towards the Church of England, to

cavil at her doctrines because they have not an authority which at present exists nowhere. You would not dispute a parent's command on the ground that it only came to you on a human authority?"

Agnes instinctively felt that this was all wrong, all false; but she did not know how to reply to it without seeming disrespectful to her confessor; and finding she was silent, he continued,

"You must not think I cannot sympathize with your yearning for an infallible guide; I understand only too well that it would be rest and peace unspeakable. But it is one of the special trials of the present day that we must bear patiently with uncertainty; that is *our* portion of the sufferings entailed upon the Church by her unhappy divisions."

This went beyond Agnes's power of endurance; but she spoke as submissively as possible, as she asked to be allowed to put two plain questions; and having received permission,

"First," she said, "what is the difference between a *division* and a *schism* in the Church?"

Mr. Nugent bit his lip, but there was no help for it; he could not elude the question, and was obliged to admit that they were one and the same thing.

"Then," Agnes asked again, "you consider the whole Church to be in a state of schism?"

"I do not see how to escape that conclusion," was the reply.

"And schism is mortal sin," said Agnes in a low voice, speaking more to herself than to him.

Mr. Nugent started; he was by no means prepared for the conclusion.

"Not where it is involuntary," he replied; "and in this case we cannot help ourselves."

"I should like to be sure of that," said Agnes. "Suppose, after all, the Church is not divided?"

"But it is : you cannot deny plain facts."

"Suppose," continued Agnes, leaving this remark wholly unnoticed, "instead of dividing the Church, we only broke ourselves off from it?"

"That is direct Romanism," said Mr. Nugent; rather sharply.

"I wish Anglicanism could say anything half so direct," was Agnes's reply.

"That is a temptation of the devil," said Mr. Nugent, bluntly.

"How? what?" exclaimed Agnes, greatly astonished.

"The Church of England knows it would be blasphemy in her to pretend to an infallible authority; she dares not claim it, as the Church of Rome does," was the somewhat indirect reply.

"Surely," said Agnes, skilfully pushing her advantage, "the Church of Rome is wise enough to be equally aware that it would be blasphemy to *pretend* to a divine authority. Do you really think she can deliberately call the Holy Ghost to witness to a lie, without being swept off the face of God's earth?"

"My dear child," said Mr. Nugent, with evident embarrassment, "you use such very strong expressions. I believe the Church of

Rome to be grievously mistaken, but not in wilful error."

"Then you must think God very cruel and very unjust," she replied.

Mr. Nugent had self-command enough not to look shocked, as he asked for an explanation of this speech.

"If I understand you rightly," said Agnes, speaking slowly and carefully, "you believe that God has permitted the whole Roman Church, including every saint who has ever lived, deliberately to take His name in vain for the last thousand years; that He has been cruel enough to permit falsehood to be taught for truth, and unjust enough to leave His most devoted servants in ignorance about the very foundation of their faith."

Mr. Nugent heartily wished himself out of the scrape, but replied quietly,

"Wherever the truth may be, it is an obvious fact that falsehood is widely taught and widely believed; it is impossible, from any point of view, to deny that."

"But the Church of Rome *alone* claims to be the one only truth, the one only way of salvation; she alone says there is no other," replied Agnes, unconsciously repeating Sœur Rosalie's words. She recollected it, however, the moment she had done so, and with the recollection came a sharp pain; but she repressed it with a strong hand, and looked steadily at Mr. Nugent for his answer. It came after a few moments' hesitation.

"I see I shall never satisfy you," he said. "I wish you would consult some one better able to

answer you than I am—Mr. Bruce, of Fernley, for instance.”

Now it so happened that Agnes had just received her cousin's invitation to Clare Hall; it seemed to fit in wonderfully with Mr. Nugent's suggestion. But perhaps she was not quite so much disposed to trust to the providential ordering of accidental circumstances as she had been at Falaix, or perhaps she mistrusted her own interpretation of them; at all events it was with considerable reluctance that she replied,

“I am thinking of paying a visit to my cousin, Miss Sydney; you know she lives at Fernley. I could easily see Mr. Bruce then, if you wish it.”

“I do wish it: I think it would be best. I will write to him, if you would like me to do so.”

“No, thank you; I would very much rather you did not,” she answered, with a very decided feeling that she would rather, under all circumstances, speak for herself.

“Very well; promise me then that you will see him.”

“Certainly I will,” she said, with a bright smile very puzzling to Mr. Nugent; but he suffered it to share the fate of several other puzzling things which he was beginning to find it inconvenient to investigate.

Agnes had some reason for her smile; a thought had flashed across her which she now proceeded to bring into definite shape. Those words of Sœur Rosalie's had stirred up thoughts and memories which three long years of crushing and stifling had never been able to extinguish.

Truly God is good beyond all power of our words to express: that first grace, so unthankfully rejected, so long resisted, had never been withdrawn; it still waited for her correspondence with it. Is not His patience far, far beyond our understanding?

This was Agnes's thought. On her way to Clare Hall she was to spend a night in London, at a friend's house, where her brother was to join her from Harrow the next morning—why should she not go and deliver Père Mérot's letter? Why not? She opened the desk where it had lain all those three years, took it out, and read the few words entreating her to lose no time in delivering it. To lose *no* time! and she had lost—how much? Involuntarily she began to reckon up not only the months, but the days and the hours; till at length a despairing "I cannot now!" broke from her lips. To some people nothing is so hard as any effort requiring a little moral courage, and Agnes was one of these people. However she might disguise it to herself, she knew very well that a Catholic could take but one view of her delay; and as she began more and more to take the same view herself, she dreaded unspeakably presenting the letter which would speak of her as having three years ago so nearly submitted to the Church. Moreover, she had an idea (resting on no tangible foundation) that Jesuits were stern and hard, unlikely to make allowance for any human weakness; what if this friend of Père Mérot's should tell her point-blank that she had lost her soul already by her trifling? This was her own

secret, haunting dread; and at last it burst its flood-gates, and swept away in one sudden rush every other fear: she determined to go, to risk all, to know the worst.

Her friend's carriage was to meet her in London, and to be at her service for any shopping or other business she might have to transact on her way from the station to Porchester Square; so far she was well provided for; but she was nervously afraid of exciting suspicion, and what possible business could a lady pretend to have in a news, where she knew the church was situated? She had never noticed that her letter was not addressed there, and observed it now with a feeling of intense relief. There seemed no further difficulty; her friend had no right to be curious as to her business at the place named, even if she ever knew that she had been there.

"Who shall I ask for, if you please, ma'am?" said the footman, as he came to the carriage-window.

Agnes hesitated a moment.

"I will speak to the servant myself," she said, not without considerable fear that no servant at all might appear, but that the door would be opened by a priest.

She was greatly relieved by seeing quite an ordinary-looking man. On being told a lady wished to speak to him, he came respectfully to the carriage.

Agnes held out her letter and a card with her own name.

"Will you be kind enough," she said, "to



give these to Mr. Hartley, and to ask if I could see him ? ”

The man did not look the least surprised, but replied quietly,

“ Father Hartley has been abroad for more than a year, ma’am ; he is not expected back at present.”

Poor Agnes had not presence of mind enough ever to act decisively on a sudden emergency, and her helplessly distressed look would have excited the compassion of a harder-hearted man than the Jesuit lay-brother ; moreover, as his eye fell upon the letter a sudden idea seemed to occur to him.

“ I beg your pardon, madam,” he said, “ but if that letter is from Father Mérot, he begged me to tell the lady who called with it that he had left a message for her with the Father Superior. He is at home now ; would you like to see him ? ”

Agnes stared at the man in utter amazement. What did it all mean ? Did Jesuits really know everything and everybody by intuition ? Would she *like* to see the Father Superior ? It was no question of liking or disliking.

“ If you please,” she said, as soon as she could speak.

She was shown into a small room, furnished plainly, but comfortably ; a few prints hung on the walls—amongst others, a portrait of Père Ravignan. She had not many moments to wait before the door was opened, and a person whom she immediately felt to be “ the Father Superior ” entered. “ Every inch a Jesuit,” was Agnes’s first

impression ; and the idea she attached to that impression was one which made her visibly tremble. His dark, somewhat stern eyes softened instantly as he addressed her.

"Miss Lyle," he said, "I cannot tell you how glad I am to see you : you must forgive me if I can hardly look upon you as a stranger after all that Père Mérot has told me."

"You know Père Mérot, then ? He has been here ?"

"Yes, I know him well ; he is often here ; he is one of our Fathers."

"Père Mérot a Jesuit !" exclaimed Agnes, evidently as much astonished as if she had been told he was a black-beetle.

"I don't wonder you are surprised," he said ; "a Jesuit to be mysterious, crafty, calculating—"

Agnes interrupted him hastily.

"No, no," she said ; "not that ; only Père Mérot was so gentle, so sympathizing—" she stopped and looked confused : her companion certainly did not look *unsympathizing* at that moment.

"And you thought the spirit of St. Ignatius was one of harshness and severity ? Well," he continued, with a smile, "I must ask you either to change that opinion, or to condemn Père Mérot as a disobedient son of our holy founder."

Agnes did not immediately reply, and hoping he had by this time set her sufficiently at her ease, he asked her for Père Mérot's letter, which he said that father had asked him to read in Father Hartley's absence. She gave it at once, and it seemed immediately to absorb his whole

attention. Agnes thought he was a long time reading it; perhaps he was reading something else too, with those quick glances from under his eyelids. At last he spoke.

"My child," he said, "you have kept our Lord waiting a long time for you."

How like those old Brittany days! how exactly like what Père Mérot himself would have said!

The tears started into her eyes as she replied (utterly unable to say more):

"Yes, father."

"But you will not keep Him any longer? You came to tell Father Hartley so, did you not?"

To say the truth, Agnes had not very clearly made up her mind what she had come to tell Father Hartley: she had meant to give him the letter, and then be guided by what he might say to her; in short, she wanted the decision to be made for her, instead of having to make it herself. She was no less a coward now than she had been three years ago, when she wished Père Mérot would make an end of her difficulties by insisting on receiving her. After a moment's hesitation she said,

"I have been trying for the last three years to satisfy my conscience in the Church of England; but it is no use, I cannot—only it is very hard to leave it."

"Hard to leave those you love *in* it—very hard, I know, my child; but surely not hard to yourself to leave a religion that you know to be false, for what you know to be the one true Church of God."

Agnes started: how had he discovered that she *knew* Anglicanism to be false, and the Church of Rome to be true? Was the Holy Ghost revealing her heart to him at that moment?

"Father," she said humbly, "what must I do? I dare not stay longer here now, and to-morrow morning I leave London."

"For how long?"

"For a visit of two or three weeks in the country; then I shall pass through again on my way home."

"There is a Catholic church near your own home, I think," he said.

"About a mile off; a very large one with several priests attached to it."

"That is good. Well, my child, what hinders you from being received as soon as you return?"

Agnes raised her eyes timidly, and fixed them with a half-frightened, half-beseeching look on those of her companion. "*There*, father?—must I be received *there*?" she said.

He smiled kindly at her as he answered, "Certainly not, if you have any reason against it; it does not matter the least. You are free of course to go where you please; you have some choice, perhaps."

"I would rather come here to you, if I may; Père Mérot wished it," she replied, still keeping her eyes fixed on his countenance, as if to assure herself that she was not venturing too far, and speaking the last words firmly, as though she felt them a sufficient apology for her request, if it needed any. She little knew how much of her character she had unconsciously revealed.

Very kindly, but more gravely than he had before spoken, the Father Superior said,

"Most gladly, my child; and if in the meanwhile it would be any comfort to you to write to me, do so; at all events let me hear from you when I may expect to see you again. I will pray daily for you; and I shall write and tell Père Mérot that he may soon leave off saying his weekly Mass for your conversion."

"You surely do not mean to say he has done that all these three years!" exclaimed Agnes.

"He promised it, you know; and he has kept his promise, though he *is* a Jesuit," replied the Father Superior, with a mischievous smile.

"How very good of him! I did not deserve that he should remember me at all."

"It would be a hard case for us all if we had only what we deserve, my child."

Agnes turned suddenly pale; the words seemed to have struck some hidden wound. She rose almost immediately to go, saying as she did so,

"Is there anything you would advise me to do till I see you again?"

"Only pray as much as you can; say the 'Veni Creator' every day for grace to be faithful to your light. And one thing more—tell me, you have been a Puseyite for the last three years, have you not?"

An indignant *No!* was on the point of bursting from her lips, but she recollected the difficulty of finding any other word that would be intelligible to a Catholic.

"Well, well, never mind names," he said; "you know we Catholics cannot understand

all those distinctions. I mean you have been accustomed to go to confession, and so on?"

"Yes," she replied; "I have been accustomed to weekly confession, and communion twice a week."

"Then do not go to either again till you are a Catholic."

He spoke sternly, and Agnes looked frightened and uneasy.

"My child," he said gently, "you cannot surely wish to insult our Lord by making a mockery of His Sacraments."

Yes, it would be a mockery, it *had* been a mockery for a long time past. She knew it, —she could not deny it; but she had never had the courage to acknowledge it to herself in plain words. It had been done for her now, and she could blind herself no longer.

"Father," she said, "I have promised to talk to Mr. Bruce."

"Talk to him as much as you like; it will do you no harm," he replied, somewhat to her astonishment; and then, after receiving his blessing, she left him.

It was under these circumstances that Agnes arrived at Clare Hall, to be subjected to Edith's penetration and Miss Brooke's raillery.

## CHAPTER XX.

Can I not mountain maiden spy,  
But she must bear the Douglas' eye ?  
Can I not view a Highland brand,  
But I must match the Douglas' hand ?  
Can it not frame a fevered dream,  
But still the Douglas is the theme ?

*Lady of the Lake.*

"Agnes," said Edith the next morning at breakfast, "what should you like to do to-day? Are you a good walker, or shall we drive? I am afraid I cannot offer you a ride, for the horse I am expecting has not yet arrived, and only one of the ponies is fit to carry a lady."

"Thank you," replied Agnes, who, to own the truth, would greatly have preferred staying quietly at home all day; "I am afraid I can hardly call myself a *good* walker, but I should enjoy either a little stroll in the park, or a drive, very much. Is the country pretty about here?"

"Pretty well," said Miss Brooke; "nothing very wonderful, and there is not much society. I am afraid you will find it dull after all the gaiety you have been accustomed to."

Edith turned quickly to her cousin, and, without giving her time to answer, said:

"But Fernley has some attractions which perhaps Agnes may think a good substitute for

gaiety now and then; for instance, two daily services, a remarkably good choir, and sound Catholic teaching."

The last words were spoken in a tone so peculiar that it was impossible to have the least idea whether it was meant sincerely or ironically.

"My love, I am sure Miss Lyle is a sound Protestant, and will be as much scandalized as I am at Mr. Bruce's"—*fooleries*, she was about to say, but had the civility to substitute—"peculiarities.—Am I not right, my dear?" she continued, turning to Agnes, who, without appearing the least discomposed, replied,

"I cannot possibly give an opinion without knowing what Mr. Bruce's peculiarities are."

Edith slowly raised her eyes and fixed them searchingly upon her cousin; but her present policy was to *watch* the game, not to take part in it.

Miss Brooke fidgeted; she was always afraid to speak of Mr. Bruce before Edith. She looked towards Harry, hoping for some help from that quarter, but Harry, with a boy's genuine love of fun, thought to himself, "You've put your foot into it this time, and no mistake," and contented himself with saying,

"Will you favour us with a list of Mr. Bruce's peculiarities?"

"O dear!" said Miss Brooke nervously; "I really don't know: he preaches in his surplice, and intones the prayers, and has early communions; and he has candles on the communion-table, and a lectern and a faldstool in the church;



I expect to see a confessional there next. Mr. Bruce may be a very good man, but—”

“Mr. Bruce is a very good man,” interrupted Edith, in the stiff formal tone with which she always cut short the very slightest reflection on Mr. Bruce’s character.

“A most appalling catalogue of crimes!” said Harry, laughing. “Have you any more accusations to bring forward, Miss Brooke?”

“Only one,” replied Miss Brooke, whose organ of combativeness had been excited by Edith’s snubbing: “he has a curate ten thousand times worse than himself.”

“Miss Brooke!” exclaimed Edith, darting one of her severest looks at her. It terrified Agnes; but Harry, who was quite innocently amused, said,

“Ten thousand times worse than himself! He must be a frightful monster of iniquity indeed.—Agnes, you had better take care of yourself; don’t get snapped up.”

Edith had left her place at the table, and walked to the window; without turning round, she now said in a cold hard tone,

“Harry, are you scholar enough to tell me if *tace* is Latin for a candle?”

“How much?” exclaimed Harry, in astonishment; but, meeting his sister’s eye at that moment, he replied,

“To be sure it is; I’m not such a dunce as all that comes to.”

Having thus quietly shot down both her persecutors, Edith addressed her cousin:

“Agnes,” she said, “we have made no plans

for the day, after all ; if you will come to me in my boudoir in an hour or so, we can talk it over ;" and with these words she left the room.

"You must excuse Edith's manner, my love," said Miss Brooke ; "I know it is very rude. I hope when she mixes more in society she will become more like other people. She has a great many very peculiar ideas, especially on religious subjects, and I am afraid this curate of Mr. Bruce's is doing her a great deal of harm. I only hope they won't fall in love with each other. I wish you would try to convince her that he is a very foolish young man."

Perhaps Agnes did not think this would be the best way to attain the desired end ; she replied :

"I am sorry you dislike Mr. Hamilton so much ; for if all I have heard of him is true, he must deserve a better opinion than you seem to have formed of him."

"Indeed ? what have you heard of him ?" asked Miss Brooke, her curiosity now excited.

This was more easily asked than answered. Agnes knew more about Mr. Hamilton through the sort of freemasonry prevailing in the High Church party than she exactly cared to repeat, and she merely replied,

"I have heard him spoken of as very holy and very self-devoted."

"I suppose that means that he says a great many prayers, and is good to the poor ; but I assure you, my love, he is more than half a

Papist, and the sooner he goes off and is quite one the better, I think."

"So do I," said Agnes very quietly; a reply which was highly satisfactory to Miss Brooke, who little suspected its real meaning.

At the appointed time Agnes tapped at the door of her cousin's boudoir. The "Come in, please," which answered her did not sound very cordial, and she entered shyly and timidly. Edith was sitting at the window with a book open on her lap, and immediately opposite to her on an easel was the drawing from which she had been making the copy sent the day before to Mr. Bruce. Agnes gave a little involuntary start of surprise as her eye fell upon the kneeling figure of the priest, and she exclaimed,

"O, how beautiful! Is this your doing? It is a portrait surely, is it not?"

"No, it is not; I mean it is not a portrait, but it is my doing," replied Edith, in the bluntest tone possible.

"Not a portrait?" repeated Agnes, looking rather incredulous; "that is strange. What made you choose that subject?"

"My own fancy, I suppose," replied Edith. "Every one bothers me about that drawing. What makes you look *so* at it?" she added suddenly, for Agnes's eyes had filled with tears.

Her answer was not exactly to the point. "You must have been very happy when you did that," she said; "it must be a great relief to be able to express one's thoughts so."

Edith fixed a keen searching look upon her cousin, but merely said:

"Do you draw yourself?"

"No, not at all," was the reply.

"But you ought; you have an artist's eye. Why don't you?"

"Because I should never be satisfied short of a perfection I could never attain."

Edith laughed scornfully.

"Then you are a coward, Agnes," she said; "you might as well say you wouldn't be a Christian because you cannot be a saint."

What was it in these words that made Agnes start and tremble? did they touch the memory of some subtle temptation? She was not strong like Edith; she could not conceal emotion; but she fought it out. Turning away from the drawing, she said cheerfully,

"You must not let me waste your time as well as my own; perhaps you have letters to write."

"No," replied Edith; "I never write letters; I have no one to write to;" there was just a very little tone of sadness in these words. "What has my aunt been talking to you about?"

"About Mr. Hamilton," Agnes answered, without adding another word, and watching, it must be confessed, with a little curiosity the effect of this announcement. But Edith neither did nor said anything that the keenest observer could interpret into betraying the slightest interest whatever; she merely remarked,

"Then you have probably heard a very bad account of him; he is no favourite of my aunt's."

"So I am sorry to find, for I had heard him so highly spoken of before that I had been

looking forward with great pleasure to meeting him."

Edith raised her eyes slowly to her cousin's face, looked at her for a moment without speaking, and then said abruptly, and as if in joke,—

"You had better not try flirting with him ; he would not like it."

Agnes coloured violently, but recovered herself quickly, and said,

"If I have heard anything like the truth of Mr. Hamilton, he must be far too good to be trifled with by any woman."

Edith suddenly snapped a stick of sealing-wax she had been rolling in her fingers ; but there was not the slightest shade of impatience or annoyance in her manner as she said,

"Yes, he *is* too good for it. But all this while we have settled no plan for the afternoon ; would you like to drive in the pony carriage ?—it will not be too hot to-day."

Agnes would have consented with equal readiness to anything, so there was no difficulty on this score ; but a drive would be no great amusement to Harry, and Edith sent for him to ask if he would like a ride.

"I will not insult you by offering you the escort of a groom," she said ; "no doubt you would prefer scouring the country by yourself."

"O yes, certainly," he replied. "How far is it to Crowland ? I should like to go there ; I want to see the abbey."

Edith gave a little shiver, and turned pale. "Don't," she said ; "don't go there, Harry."

"Why not ?" he asked, greatly astonished ;

and Agnes looked up inquiringly, but started as she saw the expression of pain on her cousin's face. If Edith was annoyed at its being noticed, she was at least careful not to betray the feeling ; but her manner was, for her, unusually embarrassed as she said,

"It is a long way, and a very bad road to get close to the abbey ; if you go there, Harry, you must let me send a groom with you,—you will want some one to hold your pony while you explore it."

Harry privately thought this great nonsense ; but he was a thorough little gentleman, and, seeing that for some reason Edith disliked it, at once said he would ride in another direction, and that he should enjoy it just as much.

As Agnes prepared to leave the room, she could not help looking again at the drawing on the easel, and her eye caught, scratched in one corner, the words, "Jesuits' Church, Naples, March 17th."

Edith saw it, and bit her lip ; but, knowing that the appearance of openness is always the best cloak for concealment, said, lifting down the drawing,

"I must put this away now ; I don't want it to get dusty and spoilt, for it is a pleasant remembrance of Naples to me, though it has no other value,—not even the value of being a correct sketch of the church, for I only drew it afterwards from memory."

"You like that church, then ?" asked Agnes, rather absently, for her thoughts were travelling back to Père Mérot, and wondering if there

were any Jesuits like him at Naples ; but the question, innocent as it was, seemed unaccountable to offend Edith.

"It does not follow that I always like what I draw," she answered in a tone of evident vexation ; in fact, her temper had got a little beyond the control of mere pride, which was all she had to restrain it with.

Poor Agnes tried to turn off the subject by saying, "Then you don't agree with Ruskin, for he says we should never do anything with our hands into which we cannot put our hearts."

Now it happened that Edith had the greatest possible admiration for Ruskin, and did most thoroughly agree with the sentiment her cousin had just quoted ; and she was consequently still more irritated, being driven either to acquiesce in a lie or to eat her own words. Her truthful nature preferred the latter alternative ; but it was with something very unlike humility that she said,

"Yes, I do agree with him entirely ; but one may have different reasons for liking to draw a thing. I don't care for that church ; I think it is ugly ; but it was a good lesson in perspective."

Agnes felt strongly tempted to ask, "Was *that* your motive for filling up the centre of your drawing with a figure which saves you all the most difficult part of the perspective ?" But she wisely let the subject drop, and went to her own room and her own occupations till luncheon-time.

In some respects, her present position was extremely embarrassing to her ; for it was diffi-

cult for her to avoid doing all that would be expected of her in such a place as Fernley, or to maintain any kind of intercourse with Mr. Bruce and Mr. Hamilton without either being deceitful, or betraying her intention of becoming a Catholic. The distance from church (it was above a mile) was a sufficient excuse for her not going to the daily service ; but the Sundays rather troubled her. She had hardly quite lost her faith (though it had never been very strong) in Anglican communions, and felt it painful to be debarred from them ; and yet she knew that the Jesuit priest had spoken the truth,—she dared not disobey him. Then there was her promise to speak to Mr. Bruce ; what was the good of it when her mind was already and absolutely made up ? What could she say ? Agnes had begun to be simple and straightforward since she had resolved to be true to her own conscience and become a Catholic ; and she could not bear the thought of professing to ask advice which she was predetermined not to follow, or instruction which she could not conscientiously accept. After some consideration, and, it must be confessed, very reluctantly, she resolved to tell Mr. Bruce the simple truth in strict confidence, and trust to his kindness to spare her any harassing arguments. She thought her best plan would be to call at the Rectory the next morning ; and as she determined to do this, she most heartily wished her visit well over.

The pony-carriage only held two ; but Miss Brooke seemed quite content to be left to her own devices for the afternoon—indeed, she



candidly owned that the ponies were so frisky she was always afraid of them.

"Agnes, are you nervous?" asked Edith, as the ponies started off with a bound.

"I am not afraid," was the reply.

They went on quietly for some miles, without much conversation beyond occasional remarks on the surrounding country; but then, just as they turned a corner, and came upon a long flat bit of road, one of the ponies tossed his head and broke into a canter, and the other, perhaps privately incited thereto by his companion, cleverly caught the reins under his tail; which feat being accomplished, they both started off at full gallop. Edith, however, was as clever in disengaging the reins as Merlin had been in getting possession of them; and as she did so she turned to Agnes, saying, "Sit still, and don't scream;" an injunction which was most obediently followed.

It was quite impossible to stop the ponies, and Edith contented herself with keeping them sufficiently in hand to avoid collision with anything they met or passed, till they approached a narrow turning on the right, up a steep hill; here she pulled them sharply round, and, as they slackened pace a little, drew her whip lightly across their necks, to show them they were not to have it all their own way; and again they sprang forward at full speed. But Edith knew what she was about. The hill was very steep; and before the middle the poor ponies had had pretty well enough of it. This time she allowed them to slacken, and brought them

quietly to a stand a few hundred yards beyond the brow of the hill.

Agnes had not shown the least sign of fear—a circumstance which began to give Edith a slight degree of respect for her; but her manner did not express this; only perhaps any one who knew her better might have discovered it in the candour with which she said, as they drove quietly home,

“I am sure you must have thought me as unreasonable as Harry did about Crowland; but the truth is, I have a dread of the place—you know my father was killed there.”

The last words were spoken bluntly, and Agnes started, for she did *not* know it. The circumstances of Sir Charles Sydney's death she knew of course; but she had either never heard, or had forgotten, the name of the place where the accident had occurred.

“I did not know,” she said; “but, dear Edith, if you thought I did, how could you suppose I should think so natural a feeling unreasonable.”

“Natural!” she replied scornfully; “yes, I suppose every folly and weakness is natural; that does not make one the less ashamed of it.”

“There is nothing to be ashamed of,” said Agnes. “I think such feelings are only wrong when they are so indulged as to make one shrink from any duty. You would go to Crowland if there were any necessity for it?”

“Of course I would; what do you take me for?” Edith answered, a little sharply; then she continued, rather as if an unwilling confession

were being drawn from her, "I do go there myself sometimes; it is only any one else going that makes me feel nervous."

Nervous!—what an acknowledgment from one who had just expressed such unbounded contempt for all natural feeling! Agnes was puzzled; she could not understand her cousin at all. She had not discernment enough to understand a character that was at once ashamed of a weakness and too proud to conceal it.

"There, Agnes; I have told you what I would not have said to any other living being," said Edith after a pause,—“except one,” she added in a low tone, correcting herself.

"I suppose you always talk freely to Mr. Bruce?" Agnes said, a little anxious to know with what kind of person she would have to deal.

"I say anything I like to him, if you mean that; but I never say *more* than I like. Mr. Bruce is not my confessor, Agnes," she replied—giving her cousin a look which seemed to ask, "Did you mean *that*?"—"and besides, to say the truth, though I hate to hear my aunt say it, he *has* some very strange opinions: he actually believes that there is only one Church!"

"So do I," answered Agnes, in the same quiet tone with which she had spoken the same words to Miss Brooke a few hours before.

"Well," said Edith, "it seems to me about as sensible as if you were to assert that there is only one nation in the world. Even waiving the claims of dissenting bodies to call themselves Churches, there is the Roman Church, and the

Greek Church, and the English Church, and the Russian Church, and the Scotch Church, and I don't know how many Eastern ones besides—Syriac, Coptic, Armenian,—more than I know the names of. I understand what a Roman Catholic means by saying there is only one Church, because he does not admit the right of any other to call itself a Church at all; but what on earth a Protestant means by it passes my comprehension. It is a mere quibble to talk about branches of the same Church; how can they be when they have no communion with each other?"

"And yet," replied Agnes, avoiding any direct answer, "it is an article of faith that there is only one Holy Catholic Church."

"That is just what Mr. Bruce says; but I don't see that it is any argument at all. Of course there was only one Church when the Creed was first composed, and they could not foresee that it would be split up afterwards."

"You think the Creed a mere human invention, then?"

"Of course I do."

"Then I wonder you can believe it at all."

Edith was on the point of saying, "I don't believe it," though she seldom spoke from impulse; and she did say,

"I don't feel necessarily bound to believe it; do you?"

"Certainly I do; but then I do not think it a mere human invention: I have always been taught that it was inspired by the Holy Ghost, and therefore equally true in all ages of the

world. But at least you must admit the Bible to be inspired ; and you know our Lord always speaks of His Church as one, and says expressly that there shall be only one Fold and one Shepherd."

"Yes, I know, I don't understand it," answered Edith wearily ; then, suddenly changing her tone, she said : "Agnes, do you know a little while ago I heard a report that you were a Catholic."

Agnes did not give her cousin any opportunity of seeing her face, as she replied in a low quiet tone :

"Do you mind telling me where, and from whom ?"

"O, it was mere gossip ; I heard it at a dinner-party. By the way, it was vigorously denied by a gentleman who seemed to know you—a Mr. Bentick."

"*He* denied it ! what could *he* know ?" exclaimed Agnes, startled out of her caution.

Edith saw it, and pursued her advantage.

"I don't think he did know very well," she said ; "but he seemed very angry. Now I come to think of it, however, what chiefly roused his indignation was its being said that you were a novice in a French convent."

"Did they say that ?" Agnes asked, still without looking round.

"Yes, they did ; which of course was absurd to any one who knew you were living at home, as I suppose Mr. Bentick did" (Agnes winced at this side-cut) : "and they said something else which I thought much more worth being angry

about ; they said another report was that you were a Catholic secretly, and were ashamed to own it—they accused you of living a lie, Agnes, and *I* denied that for you.”

“Thank you,” said Agnes ; “that was very charitable of you, as you could have had no proof to offer that it was false.”

“Charitable !” repeated Edith, who never took praise she did not deserve ; “I don’t know about that ; but I did not choose to hear any one belonging to me spoken of impertinently.”

“Well, I suppose they believed what they said ; and if so, they certainly had a right to say it,” replied Agnes very quietly.

“Agnes, how provoking you are !” exclaimed Edith, impatiently.

Poor Agnes was quite innocent of any intention to be provoking, but Edith soon explained what she meant by adding,

“You never will be angry with any one !”

“There is nothing to be angry about in this case,” was the reply.

“Nothing to be angry about ! Why, it would make *me* furious to be thought a coward and a sneak !”

“I don’t think it much matters what people think, if it is not true,” said Agnes.

“I don’t care a straw what they *think*, but no one should ever dare to *say* it of me,” returned Edith proudly. “But, Agnes,” she continued, turning full upon her cousin a look which seemed determined to penetrate the very depths of her heart, “there must have been some

foundation for all these reports ; did you ever wish to be a Catholic ? ”

There was no escape, and moreover, there was no time ; forced to answer at a moment's notice, poor Agnes did perhaps the most imprudent thing she could, by making the very unnecessary confession :

“ Yes, I was very nearly a Catholic three years ago. ”

To her extreme astonishment, instead of the sort of answer she had expected, Edith's expression changed to one of intense and eager interest, and her voice actually trembled with emotion as she said,

“ Then what on earth saves you from being an infidel ? ”

There was no possibility of answering ; Harry came cantering up to meet them, and they were within a hundred yards of the lodge-gate.

“ Don't ask me now, ” was all Agnes could say, in a low tone.

“ Nearly a Catholic three years ago, and she believes in one Church now, and is a Protestant ! It is a moral impossibility. Those people must have been right. She must be a Catholic in disguise ; but she shall not disguise it from me. I will get to the bottom of it. ” These were Edith's thoughts as she talked gaily to Harry, who trotted by their side up the drive.

## CHAPTER XXI.

Runs not the word of Truth through every land,  
A sword to sever, and a fire to burn?

*Lyra Apostolica.*

THE next morning, after breakfast, Agnes asked her cousin the way to the parsonage, saying briefly that she had business with Mr. Bruce, and wanted to speak to him.

Business with Mr. Bruce!—a perfect stranger to her, as Edith knew: what could it mean? She was not sufficiently acquainted with the practical details of Anglicanism to suspect her cousin of wanting to go to confession; and yet what business, except of a religious nature, could she have with a clergyman whom she had never seen in her life? Ever since that strange acknowledgment the day before, she had determined to compel an explanation of it, to enforce an answer to her own question, "Then what on earth saves you from being an infidel?" but she had found no opportunity of renewing the conversation. She had it now, and she seized it eagerly.

"I will walk with you there," she said.

Agnes would gladly have declined her company, but had no civil excuse for doing so; and indeed Edith could hardly have done otherwise than offer it, though politeness was by no means her motive in the matter: besides wanting to talk to her cousin, she had a



vague, undefined dislike to letting her go alone where she might meet Mr. Hamilton. Why? what did it matter? what was the poor curate of Fernley to the daughter of Sir Charles Sydney, and heiress of Clare Hall? Had she ever asked herself? Did she ask herself now? Was it those words of her cousin's, "He is too good to be trifled with by any woman," that sent a sudden pang through her heart? No, she asked herself nothing; she gave herself no time; the pain frightened her, and she crushed it down—not out, for that was beyond her power, but for the present she held it at bay.

"Agnes, why are you not an infidel?" was her abrupt address to her cousin as they walked across the park.

No wonder it had a somewhat startling effect; Agnes stood suddenly still, and turned so pale, that Edith, quietly putting her arm round her waist, with a tenderness of manner very unusual with her, said,

"I beg your pardon; I have given you pain?"

"No, thank you; at least not as you think," she replied. "I suppose God's mercy has kept me from that,—certainly nothing else."

The words "By the grace of God I am what I am," rose to her lips; but she was too humble to appropriate to herself the words of an Apostle.

"And did God's mercy give you another faith to substitute for the Catholic one?" asked Edith, with so scornful an expression that Agnes shrank from it; and yet it urged her on to say what otherwise she would certainly have withheld:

"No, dear Edith, there is no other: He preserved me from losing it altogether."

Edith's brow contracted; she remembered how strongly Mr. Hamilton had spoken of one faith, one truth, and yet had declared himself satisfied with his position as an Anglican; she could not understand it, and it annoyed her. Was there *this* bond of sympathy between him and Agnes? would *they* understand each other, and meet upon ground from which *she* was banished? That question at least should be set at rest without delay.

"I know," she said, "that some persons claim the right to hold all Roman doctrine as members of the Church of England; is that what you mean?"

Poor Agnes! she had gone too far now to retreat; she dared not deny her faith, but it was a little hard to be compelled to make her first confession of it under such circumstances.

"Well, be it so, then," she thought; "it is part of my punishment for my three years' delay."

"Hardly," she replied, "since the necessity of being in communion with Rome is the very foundation of Roman doctrine—of the Catholic Faith."

"Agnes!" exclaimed Edith, "do you know what you are saying? Is the necessity of communion with Rome part of the faith which you say God has preserved you from losing for the last three years, and yet you are not a Catholic?"

She was clear-headed enough, and keensighted to detect inconsistency in others, as persons without faith themselves generally are: it was an infidel who once said to a Catholic, "If

I believed what you profess to do about the Blessed Sacrament, I should lie prostrate before it all the day long."

"I don't wonder you are surprised and shocked," Agnes replied meekly; "but it is only lately that I have understood this clearly enough to feel the necessity of acting upon it. I do now, and I hope very soon to be a Catholic."

The last words were spoken firmly, but Edith little knew the effort they cost her. She looked searchingly at her, as if she found a difficulty in realizing the fact thus briefly but distinctly announced, which indeed was the case. She could hardly grasp the idea of any one seriously intending to become a Catholic; and when it did begin to shape itself in her mind, the effect was disturbing to a degree she could not herself account for. Her first words were not very sympathizing.

"You had better not tell Mr. Bruce," she said; "he will only worry you, and *you* would not influence *him*. Don't tell *any one*," she added with an anxious, eager look, as if a sudden fear had seized her.

Agnes read something in that look which made her sigh; she understood it only too well, and she drew Edith's arm further within her own, as she answered,

"I am obliged to tell Mr. Bruce, there is no help for it; but when I tell you that my own father does not yet know it, you will believe that I could not wish any one else to do so at present. You will be kind enough not to tell Miss Brooke?"

"Tell Miss Brooke! I should as soon think

of telling the kitchen-maid," replied Edith: "but you will make Mr. Bruce promise not to speak of it?"

"I cannot suppose Mr. Bruce capable of repeating anything said to him in confidence; what are you afraid of?" said Agnes, hazarding the question in the hope of winning a little confidence. But she was greatly mistaken if she expected it.

Edith answered in a cold, dry tone,

"I am afraid you would find yourself uncomfortably an object of curiosity, if people about here knew you were an incipient Catholic."

"Thank you," was Agnes's only reply; perhaps she knew pretty nearly as well as Edith did how much of this answer was the honest truth.

And now they had arrived at the parsonage, and were waiting in the drawing-room for Mr. Bruce. He did not keep them long; and as soon as the introduction to Miss Lyle had been accomplished, he turned to Edith and thanked her for the drawing.

"Though," he said, "I confess I should have preferred the original—*daub* did you call it?—it seems to me that what this has gained in refinement and finish, it has lost in genuineness; if it had been really a portrait, I should say it had lost its truthfulness—there has even a little expression crept in, quite different from the original: were you aware of that? There is a restless, anxious look in the eye of this; the other was perfectly at peace, though there were the remains of past suffering."

"You criticise very severely," was Edith's only reply; but Mr. Bruce, who had begun to understand her better lately, saw that she was annoyed. If it had not been for the presence of a third person, he would have tried hard to discover why; as it was he only said,

"Do I? I beg your pardon;" and turning to Agnes, said politely that he hoped she was come to make a long stay at Fernley.

"About a fortnight, I believe. Mr. Bruce," she continued, feeling very much as if she were stepping on a platform for execution, "if you are disengaged, may I speak to you?"

He looked a little surprised, but Edith relieved him from all embarrassment by saying:

"If Miss Hamilton is not at home, I will go back. You will be able to find your own way, Agnes?"

"If not I will bring her safely back," said Mr. Bruce.

Mary Hamilton was at home, however, and made her appearance at this moment; so Mr. Bruce took Agnes off to his study.

"I think you know Mr. Nugent?" she began.

"O, yes, very well; do you come from him?" he replied, thinking to set her at her ease; for Mr. Nugent had constantly sent his penitents to him for advice.

"Yes; he wished me to tell you my difficulties, and I promised to do so; but I think it is but fair to tell you frankly that I am afraid you will only be wasting your time. I have quite made up my mind to be a Catholic."

Mr. Bruce's mere experience as a confessor

had taught him to receive any communication that might be made to him without any expression of his own individual feeling on the subject; and he merely said,

"You mean, I suppose, a Roman Catholic?"

"I do," she replied, a little startled to find how readily she now ignored the claim of any others to be Catholics. A year ago how resolutely she would have asserted it for herself!

"Did Mr. Nugent know this when he sent you to me?"

"No, he did not."

"How long is it since you saw him?"

"A few days," she answered, feeling that she had involved herself in a more humiliating confession than she had intended. Edith would have foreseen and guarded against it, but Agnes was too impulsive to look forward to consequences.

Mr. Bruce looked grave and rather stern.

"Why did you not tell him?" he said; "surely you could speak as openly to him as you have now done to me. Were you afraid?" he added very kindly, as he observed the nervous quiver of her lips and restlessness of her fingers.

Here was a loophole, but she felt she could not truthfully take advantage of it; and with some effort she replied,

"I think not; I think I should have told him if I had been quite certain. I have only felt quite determined since."

"Only in those few days then? Is it owing to any special circumstance that has occurred during that time?"

It was beginning to be more than she could

endure, and, making a desperate plunge at the mortification, she said,

"My reason has been convinced for the last three years. I have done nothing lately but resolve to act upon my convictions."

She need not have so shrunk from saying it. The humiliation was quite lost upon Mr. Bruce, who evidently only thought it rather a credit to her that she had so long resisted the "temptation" to act upon her convictions.

"You mean, perhaps," he said, "that you have had doubts and misgivings for the last three years, and that they have tried your patience more than you can bear. No doubt it is a great temptation to escape from them by taking a step which promises the peace of perfect certainty; but how can you be sure that you will find this? How can you be sure that you will not be just as much harassed with doubts in the Church of Rome? And you know *there* you will be *compelled* to crush them: a wilful doubt on any article of faith is mortal sin in a Church which claims the infallible authority of the Holy Ghost for every one of her doctrines."

Poor Agnes! It was cruel to have her one secret fear dragged out into the light. She shuddered a little at it; but she had been well and solidly instructed by Père Mérot, and her good angel helped her. She said,

"As I have the firmest possible faith in that claim, I hope God will keep me from the sin of doubting; but I cannot expect it if I refuse to submit to His known truth."

"Of course, granting that it is the truth, you are bound to submit to it, but you *assume* that, and I believe it to be an unwarrantable assumption."

"Mr. Bruce," Agnes replied quietly, "I cannot enter into any intellectual or theological argument on this question. It would be quite beyond my understanding."

"Then surely," he interrupted, "you have no right to form an opinion, still less to ground any serious act upon it."

"Pardon me," she said, "surely you must believe that God can reveal His will with equal clearness to the poor and ignorant as to the wise and learned, else what becomes of all His promises, and of their hope of salvation?"

"True," he answered, "but there is no promise that each man shall be able to discover the truth for himself; he must learn it under obedience and guidance."

Agnes smiled; the game was being played into her own hands.

"Under *what* obedience, and *whose* guidance?" she asked.

"Obedience to the undivided Church of the first eight centuries, and the guidance of His own duly appointed priests," replied Mr. Bruce undauntedly.

"The obedience and the guidance seem a little far apart," thought Agnes; but it was utterly contrary to her nature, as it would have been to her conscience, to taunt Mr. Bruce, and she said quite meekly:

"But how if he doubts whether his own



spiritual guides interpret the teaching of the undivided Church rightly?"

"He has no right to doubt it; it is setting his own private judgment against——"

Mr. Bruce paused; he felt how contrary to humility it would be to say "against theirs," and he was very humble.

"Against those whom God has commissioned to instruct him," he concluded.

"But you do not believe that they are miraculously preserved from teaching erroneously? you do not believe that what the Church of England commissions you to teach has the warrant of the Holy Ghost—that it is necessarily and infallibly true?"

"No, not that; the promise of infallibility was made to the undivided Church, and since we have lost unity, we have lost absolute certainty. We can only believe that each branch of the Church will be sufficiently enlightened by the Holy Spirit for the salvation of its members."

"Then you must think that God can contradict Himself. Pardon me, Mr. Bruce, if you think me obstinate; but it is impossible to me to believe that the office of the Holy Ghost in the Church is *limited*, that He can enlighten her *partially* and *inconsistently*,—it seems so shocking to me that I even shrink from putting it into words; neither can I believe that He was her living Teacher and Guide for eight centuries, and then ceased to speak. I believe that she is the living, speaking organ of His voice now, as much as she was on the day of Pentecost; and therefore I believe that in submitting to the

Church of Rome I am not obeying any human authority or guidance, but simply putting myself under the teaching of God Himself."

She had spoken definitely and bravely, as a matter of duty, but it was a very great effort to her; it was wholly contrary to her nature, and she was physically too weak to bear excitement of any kind. The tears started to her eyes as she finished speaking; and with a vain effort to repress them she said,

"Indeed, any arguments would be useless to me; my mind is quite made up. Spare me, and let me go."

Now, to Mr. Bruce's credit be it spoken, it would never have entered his head to attempt any further argument. Of course he thought Agnes mistaken, and very seriously mistaken; still there was something at the back of his own mind which told him that his thinking her mistaken was not quite an infallible proof that she was so, and made him feel that at all events he had no right to urge her to violate her own conscience, and remain nominally under a system in which she had evidently no faith. Moreover, he was very tender-hearted, and he felt sincerely for the pain he saw she was suffering, and the trials which he knew lay before her. He assured her most emphatically that he would never distress her by any further conversation on a subject which he saw was no longer a question to her mind, and then added kindly,

"But you must not go directly; cannot you and Edith stay to luncheon? I will go and propose it to her, and come back to you."

And he was gone without waiting for an answer, leaving her to recover herself quietly; a kindness which she felt with all the gratitude it deserved.

Mr. Hamilton had joined the party in the drawing-room, for it was just one o'clock—Mr. Bruce's unfashionable dinner-hour.

Edith received his proposal to stay to luncheon rather coldly, but did not refuse, and he said :

"Miss Lyle seems very tired, I think. You must not let her walk back fasting."

"She made a very good breakfast," Edith replied bluntly : a remark which caused an irresistible laugh, and Mr. Hamilton said :

"You object to so uncatholic a view of fasting, Miss Sydney?"

She turned quickly round, with a look that seemed to say, "Are you speaking seriously?" and answered rather gravely,

"I did not know it was uncatholic."

"Will you go to my study and fetch your cousin?" Mr. Bruce said, thinking kindly that Agnes would perhaps rather not see him again alone. He was mistaken; she would have liked it : but he could not know that, and was certainly not responsible for disappointing her.

"Agnes, we are going to stay to luncheon," Edith said abruptly, without even offering her cousin any choice in the matter.

Agnes had quite recovered her outward composure by this time, and, with her usual habit of thinking always first of others, said :

"But will not Miss Brooke be expecting us?"

"Of course she will; but I dare say her expectations will not interfere with her luncheon, and besides she will have Harry to entertain. Luncheon always stays on the table till three, and I go and take it whenever I choose, if I don't happen to be at home, at the usual hour."

"Then cannot we do that now, when we go back?"

"No; because Mr. Bruce says you must not—at least that I must not let you."

"And you are so wonderfully obedient," said Agnes, with a little sly laugh.

Edith looked annoyed; she did not like any one to see how much she disliked contradicting Mr. Bruce, because, to own the truth, she was ashamed of it herself, and sometimes opposed him out of sheer spite against herself, because she did dislike it.

"No; but I don't want to fatigue you, or make you faint. Now, don't be so tiresome, Agnes. They will all be waiting for us; do come. Was Mr. Bruce kind to you?" she added suddenly, as she began to perceive that her cousin had gone through rather a trying interview.

"Yes; very, wonderfully kind."

Edith made no reply, but she thought "Strange! he would have been cross enough with *me* for it!"

Agnes took no pains to conceal the pleasure she felt in meeting Mr. Hamilton, and Edith soon saw that they had interests in common which at once threw down the barriers of ordinary conventional intercourse—interests which

they evidently did not expect her to share, for, when she approached them, with the intention of joining in their conversation, they immediately changed the subject, and spoke on indifferent matters. The only words she had heard were quite unintelligible to her; they were from Mr. Hamilton:

“Goes even beyond—does he?” (here she failed to catch the words of the speaker for a moment). The next remark that she distinguished was—“If that be true, there is only one step beyond for an honest man to take.”

Something in the conversation had evidently produced a depressing and disquieting effect upon Edith. She appeared so anxious and out of spirits when they returned to the drawing-room that Agnes readily agreed to return home without further delay.

## CHAPTER XXII.

When Heaven sends sorrow,  
Warnings come first,  
Lest it should burst  
On hearts too bright  
To fear the morrow. *Lyra Apostolica.*

"Of whom were you and Mr. Hamilton talking when I interrupted you?" asked Edith as they crossed the park.

"Of a clergyman; I don't think you are likely to know him," replied Agnes, with the cautious reserve of the "Romanizing" party among Anglicans.

"Then why did you suppose Mr. Hamilton would know or care about him?" It was said sharply, almost angrily.

Agnes looked quickly at her; she saw only too plainly the feeling that dictated those words. She replied, however, very quietly,

"Because he has often spoken to me of him; they were at college together."

"And he is going to be a Catholic, this clergyman?"

Agnes started: how came Edith suddenly to jump to a conclusion which, as she thought, she had but barely hinted at to Mr. Hamilton?

"I never said so," she replied quickly.

Edith laughed—a hollow scornful laugh.

"Take care, Agnes," she said; "I am not quite such a fool as you seem to think."

These words stung Agnes to the quick.

"Dear Edith," she said, "what do you mean? what have I done to vex you? I am so sorry."

"O, nothing; please don't say any more about it. You have not vexed me," replied Edith, "only you seem surprised at my understanding plain English."

She stopped, for she had no mind to let her cousin discover how she had been enlightened with regard to this same "plain English;" and Agnes wisely let the subject drop.

On Sunday morning Miss Brooke asked Agnes if she intended going to church, and, much to Edith's surprise, received a brief reply in the affirmative.

"Shall you remain for the Sacrament?" continued Miss Brooke.

An expression crossed Agnes's face almost as if the question had shocked her too much by its irreverence to permit her to answer it; and, observing her hesitate, Miss Brooke proceeded,

"Pray do not make any scruple if you wish it; I shall be most happy to stay and walk back with you. I know Edith will not to-day."

Edith responded to this by looking daggers at her aunt; but she watched with great curiosity for her cousin's reply. It came very quietly, a simple "No, thank you, not to-day."

"Agnes, why on earth do you go to church when you believe Protestants are all infidels and heretics, or *ought* to, if you are honest?" Edith asked, as they went to get ready.

Perhaps Agnes had more reasons than she was inclined to give; at all events she only said,

"You know your aunt knows nothing of that ; do you wish me to scandalize her by refusing to go to church ?"

"Scandalize *her* !" exclaimed Edith, evidently much amused ; " why, my dear, she would never take the trouble to be scandalized in the first place ; and in the second, she would think it highly meritorious in any one to refuse to 'sit under' such popish teaching as Mr. Bruce's. So you need not be afraid of that ; and as for me—"

She stopped suddenly, as if something had taken her breath away ; then laughed, that same cold scornful laugh, and continued,

"I am afraid it takes rather more than that to scandalize *me* ; so now, if you would prefer saying your Rosary at home you are entirely at liberty to do so ; you will scandalize no one but the servants ; and if a little fib does not stick in your throat, you can give out that you have a cold or a headache."

"Thank you," replied Agnes ; "but I intend going to church."

"O, very well ; only remember you may hear something you will not like ; Mr. Bruce is further off from a Catholic than some people think."

Why did Edith say this, knowing very well, as she did, that in the ordinary course of events it was Mr. Hamilton's turn to preach that morning, and that he was exceedingly unlikely to say anything Agnes would dislike ? Must we charitably hope she had forgotten this ?

"I do not in the least mind what I may



happen to hear," Agnes replied, which was quite as true an answer as Edith's, though hardly quite true in itself; for Agnes had a very distinct object in going to church that day. She wanted to satisfy herself, as she could easily do from various little signs how far Mr. Hamilton's Romeward tendencies reached. It was quite indifferent to her what part of the service he took; though, in case he did not preach in the morning, she meant to go again in the evening to hear him.

Edith's brow clouded, but she could say no more; and they all walked to church together.

Mr. Hamilton preached a short, very plain sermon on confession; taking for his text the words, "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins." He began: "No one—that is, none but an infidel—denies that our Lord has power *in heaven* to forgive sins, to pardon those who truly repent and pray to Him; but this is not the meaning of the words I have just read to you. You will remember that on another occasion He said, 'All power is given unto ME in heaven and on earth;' and as if expressly to silence the cavils of any who might think to restrict this power to the time of His own sojourn in the world, He immediately commissions His Apostles to 'go *therefore*' and make Christians of all nations, adding the assurance of His co-operation with them 'always, even to the end of the world.' Whatever power he *had* on earth, He has still, as truly, as fully, as in the days of His visible presence among men; and every absolution spoken by His priests in His name

is but the exercise of this power ; for since His Ascension into Heaven, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles, it has been delegated to them and to their successors for ever. He cannot lay it down, He cannot cease to exercise it, any more than He can cease to be our Mediator in heaven, and our Food in the Blessed Sacrament on earth." At the end he said, "Brethren, if we spoke these words to you to exalt ourselves, to claim any power of our own over your souls, we should indeed deserve the charge of *priestcraft*, which the world flings in our teeth, and be unworthy successors of him who, though he was Prince of the Apostles, and visible Head of the Church on earth, asked so indignantly, 'Why look you upon us, as though by *our* strength or power we had made this man to walk?' No, brethren, not in our own name, but in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth, we invite you to come, and humbly accuse yourselves of 'those things whereof your conscience is afraid.' Come in all confidence ; remember it is the same Lord who spoke so tenderly to Magdalene, who looked so lovingly on Peter, who absolved the thief on the cross, who still has power on earth to forgive sins. Fear nothing, shrink from nothing, though you speak in the ears of a sinner like yourselves : He will Himself meet you there, saying, 'It is I ; be not afraid.'"

Rather strong language certainly in a Protestant pulpit, and it was not to be wondered at that Miss Brooke's indignation broke out on the way home.

"Such shocking perversion of Scripture!" she said; "he might as well have said, 'There is no God,' and left out, 'The fool hath said in his heart'!"

"Nay," said Agnes gently, "he only gave the ordinary Catholic interpretation of the text."

"Catholic interpretation indeed! a nice thing for a Protestant clergyman to do! and a nice thing for a Protestant rector to sit by and hear him do! Wolves in sheep's clothing, both of them! Why can't they be honest and turn Papists?"

"It strikes me Mr. Hamilton is singularly honest," replied Agnes, vainly endeavouring to pour oil on the troubled waters; "he evidently thinks it his duty to teach what he believes to be the truth at any risk of consequences."

Miss Brooke remembered that Edith was within hearing, and knew that she was treading on dangerous ground; but she could not forbear answering:

"Well, all I know is, it is rank Popery; and if he believes it, he ought to be ashamed to call himself a Protestant."

"I don't think he went beyond the teaching of his own Prayer-book," Harry ventured to remark, with a malicious view of "getting a rise" out of Miss Brooke. He got rather more than he bargained for.

"My dear Harry," she said, in a tone of the utmost anxiety and concern, "how distressed your excellent father would be if he heard you already beginning to exalt the Prayer-book above the Bible!"

Perhaps Harry had his own private opinion of his "excellent father's" views on that subject, for he bit his lip and coloured, but replied rather bluntly :

"I said nothing about the Bible."

Edith meanwhile had never spoken ; she was intent, or apparently so, on watching a thick black cloud over their heads ; and now, without giving Miss Brooke time to speak again, she said drily,

"It will rain before we get home."

And so it did, and very heavily too, most effectually throwing cold water on the conversation. Miss Brooke ran with all speed, having regard to a certain feather in her bonnet ; Harry chivalrously kept pace with her, holding his own umbrella over her head ; Edith, who was supremely indifferent as to spoiling her dress, leaned over the parapet of the bridge they happened to be crossing, and watched the large heat-drops as they fell into the bubbling foam of the dancing Laira, without even putting up her umbrella ; Agnes, who was too delicate to bear exposure to wet with impunity, suggested that they should scramble down under the bridge for shelter, and sit on the rocks till the shower passed over, which accordingly they did.

For some moments neither spoke. Edith was the first to break the silence ; she said,

"You did not think the sermon dishonest then, Agnes ? You do not think—" she paused.

Agnes saved her from further embarrassment by saying,

"I do not think *Mr. Hamilton* dishonest certainly."

Edith looked relieved; she spoke more quietly,

"Then you do not think it inconsistent to hold such opinions in the Church of England?"

Seeing that she had held them, or professed to do so, herself for the last three years, this was rather a humiliating question; but she took the mortification meekly, and replied,

"That is quite another matter. Yes, I do think it inconsistent: if I did not, I should remain where I am."

Edith turned round almost fiercely; something was evidently exciting her quite beyond her ordinary powers of self-control.

"Do you mean to say," she said, in a voice low only from suppressed emotion, "that you are going to the Church of Rome only for the sake of confession and absolution?"

Agnes gave a penetrating glance at her cousin before she answered; a sudden painful suspicion had occurred to her, and, instead of turning off the subject, as her own inclination would have led her to do, she replied,

"O, no; not *only* for that; but I believe that the Sacrament of Penance is necessary for salvation, and the English Church has neither priesthood nor sacraments,—her clergy have neither the right to hear confessions, nor the authority to give absolution."

"And yet they do it: how can they without being certain?" was the very unexpected reply.

Agnes felt very much like a person walking

along a dangerous path in the dark as she answered,

"I suppose those who do so think themselves certain; I am sure Mr. Bruce does."

"And Edwyn Hamilton?"

It was said in a low voice, as if to herself, and so involuntarily that she was not even aware of having spoken his Christian name, till she felt Agnes's hand in her own, and heard her say in a grave tone,

"Edith!"

Then, with the most perfect self-possession, she turned quietly round, and asked coolly,

"What is the matter?"

It was a kind of self-control Agnes did not understand, and it thoroughly effected its purpose of deceiving her.

"Nothing; I beg your pardon, I misunderstood you," she replied, rather shyly and awkwardly.

Edith laughed.

"Well, it was very impertinent of me, I grant," she said; "I beg your pardon for shocking your notions of propriety. But now I think we have had enough of theology for the present; the rain is over, what do you say to going home?"

"By all means: I am quite ready," Agnes said. To own the truth she was wet and cold, and glad enough to move.

Apparently, however, Edith had not had quite enough of theology, for as they walked, she said,

"Agnes, how soon will you have to go to confession?"

*How soon!* These words had been haunting her with a secret dread ever since her final decision, and she started as if they had risen up out of her own heart and confronted her. Edith smiled contemptuously; there were few things she so much despised in others as want of self-command. She did not repeat her question, but only looked steadily at her cousin, with a determination to be answered.

"Whenever I am received; it is part of the act of submission to the Church," was the reply.

"Are you afraid?"

"Afraid of confession? no, it is not new to me."

It was Edith's turn to be startled now; but she did not show it; she only said,

"Do you mean to say that Catholic priests will hear confessions from Protestants? I wish—" she stopped suddenly, angry with herself for the involuntary word, and then added,

"I wish you had not told me so."

Agnes was at a loss to account for her meaning, but she had long since discovered that any attempt on her part to understand her cousin was a hopeless task. It grieved her, for she saw how sadly Edith needed confidence and sympathy; and however hopeless the task might be, she had determined not to give it up.

"I have not told you so," she said; "and moreover it is not true."

Was she mistaken in supposing that a shade of disappointment passed over Edith's face? She replied,

"O, Agnes, how *could* you go to any one that

you did not believe had the right to hear you, or power to absolve you?"

Poor Agnes had had enough of unnecessary confessions: she did not make one this time, but she felt none the less keenly humiliated as she said,

"Of course I could not do so *now*, believing as I do: it was different before."

"You really had faith, then, in the English Church once? How long ago? When did you lose it?"

"I cannot answer you now; and indeed, excuse me, dear Edith, but the subject is very trying to me just now; I would rather not talk of it."

They walked on silently to the house; and in the afternoon Edith went alone to church, Agnes remaining with Miss Brooke. A consuming doubt haunted Edith; cost what it might, she *must* satisfy it. She lingered in the churchyard till the two clergymen came out. Mary Hamilton was waiting for them too; it annoyed her; she barely spoke as she passed, and did not join her, but paced impatiently up and down. Mary could not help feeling vexed, but was not surprised; Edith's manner had been so changeable of late that she had given up being surprised at anything from her. She had said one day to her brother, "I think Miss Sydney must be ill, she seems so restless;" and he had greatly mystified her by replying, "I think not; at all events don't tease her about it."

As soon as they came from the church Edith went straight up to Mr. Hamilton and said,

"I want to speak to you."



She made no request, offered no apology for her interruption ; evidently she was thoroughly in earnest. Mr. Bruce looked at her, and hesitated a moment ; then quietly dropping his nephew's arm, offered his own to Mary, and walked on with her.

Edith waited only till she was sure they were out of hearing, and then, without a word of preface, greatly startled her companion by asking, "Do you hear confessions?"

He was even startled out of his habitual self-control, for he turned and looked at her with an expression in his eyes that she had never seen there before, and that made her involuntarily draw back a little.

"Mr. Bruce does," he replied.

"I did not ask you that," she said ; "*do you* hear them?"

He seemed for a moment doubtful about his answer, but it was definite enough when it came :

"No, I do not."

"Then why—what did you mean in your sermon this morning?"

If he hesitated now it was not from any doubtfulness about his answer. He had quite made up his mind as to the use he ought to make of such an opportunity if it were offered him ; it was only for a short mental prayer that he waited, and then he replied,

"I hope I meant exactly what I said—that our Lord instituted the Sacrament of Penance for the forgiveness of sins ; but in inviting persons to confession I never meant to invite them

to myself. Every one is free to choose his own confessor, and there are plenty to choose from."

"But suppose, then, any one chose to come to you, would you hear them? would you give them absolution?"

"No, not at present; I should send them to Mr. Bruce."

"And yet you say every one is free to choose his own confessor, and you are—you believe yourself—a priest with power to give absolution. Mr. Hamilton, will you give me your confidence?—I promise you not to abuse it. Will you tell me *why* you would not hear confessions?"

It had taxed her self-command to the utmost to speak these words calmly, and she could not quite conceal from one so watchful of her as Mr. Hamilton that her question involved something of deep interest to herself. He had made up his mind how to act under the circumstances, and he did not shrink now that it came to the point.

"Because one must first be *very, very* sure of one's own authority, and I am not quite clear about mine. It would take too long now to explain to you the difference between orders and jurisdiction; but they are quite distinct; and if jurisdiction is necessary, my being a priest does not in itself give me any right to hear confessions, nor do I see how it is possible to obtain it in the English Church."

She could not complain now that he had not given her his confidence; and though the special

difficulty he spoke of was perfectly unintelligible to her, the deduction was plain enough.

"Then you think something necessary to salvation which cannot be obtained in the English Church?"

"Stop," he said, while his brow contracted with an expression of intense pain; "do not push me beyond what I have said. Remember it was only an *if*, and only that *I* do not *see* my way clearly; that may only prove my own blindness, not the impracticableness of the road. If I were sure of it, how could I with any honesty preach as I did this morning, or remain a day in my present position?"

They had been walking up and down before the church-door all this time in full sight of all the stragglers in the village, a circumstance which rather worried Edith; it never occurred to her that Mr. Hamilton had done it on purpose to spare her the comments that would certainly have been made if they had walked across the park to Clare Hall together. But she had gone through as much as she could bear now, and looked forward with a certain sensation of relief to her long solitary walk home. She gave him her hand, and a look which said better than words could do, "You may trust me;" and only saying, "Thank you very much," she left him.

So ended a conversation during which neither had the least idea of what the other had suffered. It had been a struggle to both, and both had fought it out bravely—but with very different weapons, and consequently with very different re-

sults. This showed itself already in their actions. Mr. Hamilton walked home slowly, calmly, with the peacefulness of a suffering voluntarily endured on his countenance ; Edith with a haste and excitement which would have given any one who saw her the impression that she imagined herself pursued by some frightful apparition.

"You are late for dinner, my love," was the sympathetic greeting that awaited her from Miss Brooke.

No pause, no time for thought ; she was rather glad of that.

"O, well, never mind," she said, throwing off her bonnet and shawl, "if Agnes will excuse my dressing."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

The heart is never safe unless it trembles while it woos ;  
Man cannot love a treasure that he does not fear to lose.

F. W. FABER.

"You are tired to-night, dear," said Agnes, following Edith into her room when they went up to bed.

"Yes, very ; good-night, Agnes."

It was said in a tone of such direct and positive dismissal, that any one but Agnes would have been offended ; but she only quietly kissed her cousin and left her.

Was Edith tired ? It did not seem so, for she made no preparation for going to bed after dismissing her maid. She had a stern work to do ; and with the passionate energy of her nature she drew it close to her, looking unflinchingly in its face : any actual pain was more endurable to her than suspense. Most keenly did she sympathize with those memorable words of Newman, "That a thing is true, is no reason that it should be said ; but that it should be *done*, acted upon, made our own inwardly."

The first part of her work was clearly to realize certain facts that had been revealed to her that day ; and this requires more courage than is supposed by persons who never trouble themselves

to do it, and are content with a vague, dreamy life—"taking everything as it comes," as they call it; which really means neither using nor profiting by anything.

Edith did not for a moment attempt to disguise from herself that she loved Edwyn Hamilton, loved him with the whole force and strength of a heart which had never known any other object of affection, human or divine. Her first impulse was to laugh to scorn the mere worldly pride which asked how the heiress of Clare Hall, the last descendant of the noble house of Sydney, could stoop to the level of a poor curate. Her very pride itself made answer, "Am I not free? Who shall dare to control me? who shall dare forbid me to give my heart to whom I will? and who dares despise *him*? I love Edwyn Hamilton,—not the curate of Fernley; and who dares to say he is unworthy of my love?"

But this was not her real trouble: the world might judge her as it would, she could afford to set it at defiance; but how was it with Edwyn Hamilton himself? Not a word, not a look, till that momentary startling glance a few hours ago, had ever given even the very faintest sign of the feeling that moment revealed to her. What did this mean? It could not have sprung suddenly to life then; it must have been lying deep down, concealed, crushed, for long. And then that other revelation of unsteadfastness in his faith! Edith pressed her hand tightly to her brow, and tried to grasp it all. Why was it that, while men whom she openly scorned and repulsed were perpetually at her feet, the only one who need

have feared no repulse seemed to shrink from her? There was one very obvious reply: he was poor, a man of no family, no position; it would have been in the eyes of the world the height of presumption in him to aspire to her hand. This alone in most cases would have been sufficient, but it did not satisfy Edith: in the first place she was by no means sure that Mr. Hamilton had any regard for the world's view of social questions; and, in the next, she had read a few books lately by his recommendation, which, though they did not speak definitely on the subject in plain words, she had quite common sense enough to see implied, that any very earnest and self-devoted clergyman who acted upon the principles they advocated could not consistently marry. Over and over again, as she read, she had cursed bitterly in her heart the "cruelty," as she thought it, which had bound the obligation of celibacy on the priesthood; and it was no comfort to her that the Anglican communion did not impose it—she knew well enough that Mr. Hamilton submitted his conduct as well as his faith to something more than the mere "Church of the Reformation."

And now the first warning of a still heavier blow had been struck; she could not disguise it from herself. She felt far more convinced than Edwyn Hamilton himself did, that it would end in his being a Catholic; women are often more far-sighted than men, and Edith had, mentally, an eagle's eye. Had she not read in a book he had himself lent her, "All Catholics get to Rome in the end, spite of wind and tide"? and did he

not call himself a Catholic? She knew him too well, too, to suppose for a moment that the mis-giving he had expressed to her came from a passing feeling or a sudden impulse; she knew well that the very impetuosity of his nature had made him all the more guarded in his words; and moreover, he had not been speaking under the influence of excitement, but quite calmly and deliberately.

"And if he becomes a Catholic he will be a priest." What tormenting spirit kept hissing these words into her ear? She sat still, rigid, her hands clasped tightly together, her eyes fixed in a sort of stony gaze upon something certainly not visible to their physical organs. Still outwardly, but how was it inwardly? We dare not describe the storm of passion which those clenched hands and fixed eyes chained down, as it were, in the depths of her heart: the bitter hatred against the Church—nay, against the very God who would rob her of her one idol; the awful eagerness with which she tried to persuade herself that it might be yet possible to draw his heart aside from its allegiance, and bind it to earth. No wonder she had no sleep; no wonder she came down the next morning with a violent headache, scarcely touched her breakfast, and returned to her boudoir directly after.

Agnes followed her; her compassionate nature could not see suffering without making some attempt to alleviate it; but she had taken upon herself a thankless office. Edith was in a sharp irritable mood, inclined to quarrel with everything and everybody.



"I am busy this morning," she said crossly, when her cousin came in.

Busy! Agnes looked round; there was no sign of any sort of occupation in the room. She ignored this, however, and said cheerfully:

"Then I am sure you ought not to be, for you are not well. Can I do anything for you?"

"Not well! nonsense! How fanciful you are, Agnes!"

Agnes stooped down and kissed her.

"Indeed, dear, your head is quite burning. Do put your books away and come out into the air."

"The air won't do me any good," replied Edith, doggedly. It was something, however, to have gained this sort of tacit admission that she was unwell.

"Then let me read to you a little; shall we go on with Wallenstein?"

It was an unfortunate suggestion. She did not want to be reminded of Thecla just then.

"No, thank you; my head aches too much to attend to it—besides, I thought you did not like Wallenstein. I don't believe you admire him a bit."

"I admire the play extremely; but I certainly have no personal love for Wallenstein, if you mean that."

"Hang personal love!" exclaimed Edith, with a vehemence which somewhat startled poor Agnes; "but what is it that you dislike in Wallenstein?"

"His intense pride. I think he is the very proudest character I ever met with."

"That is exactly what I like him for," replied Edith. Perhaps if she had stopped to think she would not have said it; but she was certainly not prepared for the grave look of distress with which Agnes answered:

"What you like him for! Do you mean seriously that you like pride?"

It was not in Edith's nature to deny a truth, even at the risk of giving scandal; but she seemed now actually to glory in it.

"Yes, I do mean it seriously," she said. "I like pride; I admire it; I despise any one who is without it."

"And yet it is a mortal sin."

"A—*what?*" exclaimed Edith, with the most unfeigned astonishment.

"A sin which deprives us of God's grace," replied Agnes quite calmly.

Edith looked up and smiled—but it was such a smile as made Agnes involuntarily cross herself—as she answered coldly,

"I suppose that is a Catholic doctrine; I don't understand it."

"And suppose it should be a true doctrine, dear Edith?" Agnes spoke very earnestly.

"Well, what then?"

Agnes secretly said a "Hail, Mary," before she answered:

"Then it follows that if we are proud, or love pride, we are in danger of losing our souls."

"Indeed! what, in spite of your other doctrine of absolution? I suppose it doesn't matter if you only go periodically to a priest and tell him so."

It was said flippantly and irreverently, and though Agnes could scarcely resist a temptation to smile at the extreme ignorance betrayed by her cousin, she was too much really distressed to answer otherwise than very gravely :

"The mere *acknowledgment* of a sin is not sufficient for absolution ; and if beyond this you acknowledged that you liked and admired it, and meant to continue in it, every confessor in the world would tell you that your salvation was impossible as long as you remained in such dispositions."

She had spoken thus strongly in the hope of frightening her cousin, for she saw no other hope of doing her any good ; but if Edith were frightened, she took very good care not to betray it ; she only said very drily,

"What *is* sufficient then for absolution ?"

"Sorrow for your sin, a real determination to renounce it, and willingness to make any restitution or satisfaction that may be required of you. A priest cannot give absolution unless he is satisfied of the right disposition of his penitent."

Edith turned slightly away, and rested her head upon her hand ; perhaps it ached more painfully.

"*Cannot*, Agnes ?" she repeated—"cannot ? I thought your priests had unlimited power."

"And therefore power to retain as well as to remit."

There was silence for a few moments ; then Edith asked :

"Who taught you all this, Agnes?"

"A Jesuit."

Agnes did not make her reply thoughtlessly; she remembered the sketch of the interior of the Jesuits' church at Naples.

"A Jesuit! ah! Well, you know a Jesuit once said that he thought it 'a glorious thing to live, and to suffer, and to die, for what one knows to be a lie,'"—it was spoken in a scoffing tone.

"Never!" exclaimed Agnes warmly,—“never, unless he were an apostate.”

"Nay," replied Edith, with a quiet cold smile; "he was a martyr, put to a cruel death for his religion by the heathen."

"You have got hold of some vile Protestant calumny—where did you find it?"

Agnes's eyes flashed, and the colour had mounted to her very temples.

Edith looked at her and laughed.

"So, then, you *can* be angry; you *can* be excited? You are not so very angelic after all? I read it in a Protestant history of the martyrs of Japan; and I don't see why that should not be as authentic as the Catholic Martyrologies."

Agnes knew better than to attempt any useless argument; but she looked steadily at her cousin, and said bravely,

"Edith, you are trying to deceive me. You no more believe what you have been saying than I do."

Yes, it was the truth; but it was humiliation intolerable that Agnes should have discovered it.

—discovered that *she*, who scorned falsehood with the bitterest contempt, should yet have stooped to it for— Ah! for what?

“I neither believe nor care anything about it; I suppose if the man was a hypocrite it hurt nobody but himself,” she replied.

Agnes felt strongly tempted to answer, but on second thoughts refrained. Edith looked thoroughly ill; her headache was evidently real enough, and Agnes, always ready to make excuses for others, gladly attributed her cousin’s irritability to physical causes. She quietly brought a small couch into the open window, drew the blind half-way down, and partly closed the shutters, so that only the waving boughs of trees could be seen, and then said:

“You will be more comfortable here, and there will not be too much light. Take my advice for once; lie still and be idle till luncheon-time, and perhaps you will sleep off your headache.”

“Good heavens, Agnes, are you mad?” exclaimed Edith, pulling the blind up violently, and straining her eyes across the park in the direction of the village.

People may say what they like about the danger of a fertile imagination, and a great deal of what they say may be very true; but it is nevertheless also true that without imagination it is impossible to have much power of sympathizing with others. How many seemingly unkind things are said and done, how many wounds are given, how many painful misunderstandings arise, not at all, as is generally supposed, from

coldness or want of willingness to sympathize, but simply from the absence of any imaginative faculty in so many persons, rendering it impossible to them. A person must be able really and literally to throw himself *into* the minds of others, to feel not merely *for* them but *with* them, in order to sympathize with them. And this is just what an unimaginative person cannot do; he has no more idea of what another is feeling under circumstances of which he has no personal experience, than a cat could have of the sensations of a war-horse on the battlefield; and therefore he cannot possibly understand or judge of the line of conduct that would naturally result from such feelings; and not understanding it, it either puzzles, offends, or scandalizes him, as the case may be.

Agnes Lyle—whether happily or unhappily for herself we will leave to the judgment of others—had the imaginative faculty very strongly developed, as phrenologists would say; she had no need to ask any questions: one glance showed her that a part of the path leading from the vicarage to the church was visible from Edith's window, one moment's thought reminded her that it was about the time when the daily morning service ended. Involuntarily a deep sigh escaped her; she saw only too plainly how it was; she knew only too well how it must end: but what could she do? She could not take by storm a confidence Edith was not inclined to give; she could not even venture upon the slightest warning that would have betrayed Mr. Hamilton: she did not know how far he had already betrayed himself.

Edith presently turned round with an impatient gesture.

"We can drive after luncheon if you like," she said; and Agnes had of course no alternative but to agree and leave the room. Just, however, as she was doing so, Edith suddenly called her back, saying:

"You offered to help me just now: would you mind writing a few notes for me, only just formal invitations? You are fond of music; you would like to hear some, and it is very dull here with nothing going on; there are several musical people in the neighbourhood; we will have a few some evening early next week, before you go. I never stand upon much ceremony with anybody; they shall walk about the park in the afternoon, and come in to music and supper afterwards; that will be least trouble. Look; will you write these? here are the names and addresses."

She had spoken rapidly and rather nervously, and had all the time been writing the rough draft of a note, which she now handed to Agnes, with a memorandum-book containing the names and addresses of most of the families in the neighbourhood.

This was a little beyond the stretch even of Agnes's imagination, and she began seriously to think her cousin was getting light-headed, either from suffering or illness.

"Pray do not think of giving a party for me," she said; "I assure you I would very much rather be quiet; I have plenty of that sort of thing at home."

But Edith had a definite plan in her head, and did not choose to be put out in it; she merely took the memorandum-book and made a pencil-mark against some of the names.

"I owe these people some civility," she said; there are only a few, and I want to have them. You won't mind helping me to entertain them?"

The tone was so different; it was more like pleading for a charity than offering a pleasure or expressing a desire. Agnes was surprised; but, putting aside for the moment everything but the gratification of finding that at last her cousin would really accept a kindness from her, she said:

"Mind it? O no, I shall be very glad to be of the least use to you;" and taking the book she left the room to write the notes.

Edith stood at the window; presently two figures passed along the vicarage path—a man and a woman. Edith seized an opera-glass; they were Mr. Bruce and Mary Hamilton.

She turned and sat down at her writing-table, carefully examined all her pens till she found one to suit her, and then wrote the following note, in a firm, bold hand:

"DEAR MR. BRUCE,—I have a few friends coming on Monday evening, and hope to have some good music. We shall have tea about six, under the clump of trees behind the house, if it is a fine day, and stroll about the park till dusk. Will you join us with Mr. and Miss Hamilton?—Yours affectionately,  
EDITH SYDNEY."



Of course she knew that she ought to have written a separate invitation to the Hamiltons; but she knew *he* would not care about the conventional politeness, and if Mary was offended it would not signify.

Having done this, she actually took her cousin's advice, darkened her room, and lay down with the determination not to move till luncheon-time, —being, in fact, driven thereto by sheer physical exhaustion.

But now it is time that we should know a little more about Mr. Hamilton. Let us see what he is doing instead of going to church as usual this morning. But first let us try to understand him a little better than we have done hitherto. The friends who knew him most intimately would tell us that he has the imagination of a poet, the enthusiasm of a saint, the inflexibility of a confessor, and the courage of a martyr. Further, they would perhaps tell us that he is impetuous and passionate, singularly impatient of control, and was never known to submit his judgment in any one instance to that of another. And all this, and more than this, was true of him only two short years ago.

What are we to think of it as we look at him now? He is sitting at the table in his study, with a pen in his hand and a sheet of paper before him; and so he has been sitting for the last half-hour—perfectly calm, perfectly still, but without writing a single word. Does this look much like impetuosity?

Presently he opened a secret drawer in his writing-table and took out a little note. It was

dated about a year ago, a few days before he received the full Anglican orders, and ran thus :

“MY DEAR HAMILTON,—For God’s sake do not add blasphemy to heresy. Be content to read ‘Dearly beloved,’ and preach what may send your hearers to Rome before you. Don’t play with the Sacraments. Seriously, my dear fellow, you know too much to usurp the office of a priest, without a fearful responsibility.—Yours most faithfully, and very sorrowfully.”

The note was characteristic of its writer, one of Edwyn Hamilton’s earliest and dearest friends, and yet it had been received impatiently, and answered arrogantly. How well he remembered that answer !

“MY DEAR ——,—I have studied the question of Anglican orders from all points, and see no reason to doubt their validity. Are you so very sure that *you* are not insulting our Lord by refusing to recognise us ? ”

The reply to this did not reach him till a few days after his ordination. It was not very consoling.

“MY DEAR HAMILTON,—Granting your orders, for argument’s sake, what do you think is the position of a priesthood deprived of all right to exercise its functions ; from whom do you derive your jurisdiction ? ”

"Why, from our own Bishops, to be sure," thought Edwyn. Was it "to be sure," though? How if it must be derived direct from the See of Rome? Ah! but that was granting the very keystone of Roman doctrine—the supremacy of the Pope. Was the whole Anglican priesthood a dead letter for want of jurisdiction from Rome? He could not think it; he *would* not think it. He put it from him as a temptation; crushed it down by main force whenever it raised its head and looked him in the face; and went on his way trampling it under his feet, though oftentimes its thorns and briars pricked him sorely. And yet, crush it as he would, it did its work. He felt discouraged, dispirited, disappointed, as all warm-hearted, ardent natures do when they come in contact with the world. Only too truly it has been said that

it is manhood's haughty right to quell  
Young fancy's fire, and break the darling spell;  
To strip the mind of all she valued most,  
And grant her no return for what she lost.

This had been the case with Edwyn Hamilton, far more bitterly than in the ordinary way; for it was not any mere dream of life that had failed him, but all that to a priest, as he believed himself, made life worth living for at all. He had come to Fernley, expecting to find in his uncle one who would sympathise heartily with all his hopes and desires, and give him every facility for carrying them out to the fullest extent;—he had devoted himself, heart and soul, and mind and strength, to the Church of England, fondly believ-

ing that it needed only a zealous and faithful body of her own clergy to restore her to Catholic unity; and he found—what? Nothing could be kinder, or, up to a certain point, more sympathising, than Mr. Bruce, but he met Edwyn's eager impetuosity with admonitions to prudence, to caution, to patience (fancy talking of patience to a bursting heart!). He urged the danger of bringing startling truths too plainly before unprepared minds; and when his nephew indignantly appealed to the noble confession of St. Paul, "I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God," he very quietly replied,

"Are you as certain as St. Paul was that you know the whole counsel of God?"

The slightest shadow of a rebuke touched Edwyn to the quick; he was by nature easily wounded, and, as we have already had occasion to say, something there had been in his past life which had taught him humility. From that day he became outwardly changed; how much he chafed and fretted in his own heart at the restraint, God alone knew; but he never again attempted to "teach Roman doctrine" in the bold, undisguised language of his first few sermons. He kept carefully, scrupulously, with a studied coldness, within the limits permitted him by the inconsistencies of his own communion; or if occasionally the pent-up fire burst its bonds, and broke forth in some indignant repudiation of *via media* cowardice, or some eloquent assertion of full Catholic truth, he checked himself with a suddenness that startled his hearers, even as he had done when betrayed into that involuntary

confession of faith in the infallibility of the Church to Edith.

No wonder that a friend who spent some days with him about this time said :

"Why, Hamilton, what has come over you? You seem to have lost all your enthusiasm, and taken up with the *cui bono* system; and you contradict yourself like the rest of us, instead of like the obstinate fellow you used to be."

Mr. Bruce had observed a change gradually passing over him. The fire and eagerness of his zeal had gone, and another and totally different character began to be observable in his way of working in the parish.

Not that he neglected his work: his night-school, his confirmation-classes, his instructions on confession to those whom he was preparing for it, his visits to the sick—all were unremittingly and punctually attended to; but his interest in them seemed gone, it was all gone through as a cold dry duty. Mr. Bruce could not but perceive this, and one day said kindly to him:

"Edwyn, you are disappointed: you were over-sanguine at first about the revival of Church principles, and now you are discouraged because they do not spring up before you have given them time to take root. Have a little patience, my dear fellow, and a little more faith; we shall live to see England Catholic yet."

"God grant it!" was Edwyn's only reply.

With an honest mind this state of things could not last long, and on one point it soon came to a crisis.

One evening he came home late from a sick call, looking wearied and oppressed, and stood for some moments silent, with his arm resting on the mantelpiece. Presently he said :

"This is dreadful : I will never hear any more confessions."

Naturally enough misinterpreting his meaning, Mr. Bruce said :

"My dear Edwyn, you know I warned you how it would be ; you must learn to bear this : our Lord will help you. Only think of the sin of the whole world ever before *His* eyes, ever seen in the light of His perfect purity, and yet He bears with us ; what right have *we* to be disgusted with our fellow-men ? Of all venial sins that a priest can indulge in, fastidiousness is about the worst."

"Stop, stop !" exclaimed Edwyn, shocked beyond measure that his uncle should think him capable of even thus indirectly breaking the seal of the confessional. "You quite mistake me ; it is not that at all ; but I don't believe I have the least right to give absolution, and I will never do it again."

"How ? what ? Don't you believe yourself a priest ?"

Edwyn turned slowly round, and looking gravely at his uncle, said :

"As to the validity of my orders, yes, to the best of my present judgment ; but we have no jurisdiction, and I cannot satisfy myself that we have any right to exercise our functions without it."

"Jurisdiction !" repeated Mr. Bruce. "Why

on earth should you plague yourself about that ? It is the most uncatholic of all Roman inventions."

"And yet the Holy Ghost says, 'How shall they preach except they be sent?'"

"Come, come, you need not be scrupulous about that ; you have your faculties for preaching direct from the bishop," replied Mr. Bruce.

"But no faculties for hearing confessions."

"Yes, in the very words of the ordination service ; is not that enough for you ?"

Edwyn was not inclined to argue, and moreover he felt that it would be useless ; he merely said :

"No, it is not enough ; I must give up my penitents to you."

"Upon my word, that is rather too bad !" said Mr. Bruce, half inclined to laugh, for he could hardly realise that his nephew was serious. "Because you are afraid of committing a sin yourself, you want me to commit it for you—nice moral theology that ! Did you get it out of St. Alphonsus ?"

Mr. Hamilton felt hurt—it is not pleasant to be snubbed when one is in earnest ; but he tried to take the mortification meekly, and answered gravely,

"No ; I got it out of St. Paul."

"I do not understand you," said Mr. Bruce, speaking gravely enough himself now.

"I mean simply this," replied Edwyn ; "St. Paul says that 'whatsoever is not of faith is sin ;' you know the context of those words : but it can be no sin in *you* while you are acting in

good faith. I suppose," he continued, after a slight pause, "that is what the Church means by invincible ignorance."

To Mr. Bruce this conclusion was rather a puzzling *non sequitur*, and he made no reply to it; he only said, rather abruptly:

"I wanted you to preach on confession next Sunday."

"And so I will, with all my heart," answered Edwyn; "but I will hear no more confessions myself till my mind is clear."

Such were the antecedents of the sermon and the conversation with Edith which we have described above.

But a still further change had passed upon Edwyn since that conversation, a change the extent and the results of which we must leave to a future chapter.

---

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

The dearest offering he can crave,  
His portion in our souls to prove—  
What is it to the gift He gave,  
The only Son of His dear love!

*Christian Year.*

DID we ever think of the tower of Babel with any other feeling than that of amazement at the extraordinary *folly* of its builders? Probably not. Even as little children we ridiculed the senselessness which must have prompted their



act. Well, no doubt it was a most extravagant piece of folly, and no doubt they were still more foolish if they were surprised at their defeat; but it must have been none the less an intense mortification to them. They had laid their foundations deep and strong, they had raised story upon story of their edifice successfully; and one day, suddenly, in a moment, they knew not how or why, all was at a standstill, all was confusion, perplexity, dismay; and they stood staring in speechless mortification at the work, which, instead of reaching to heaven, probably only waited for the first storm to crumble to the earth.

Something like this had happened to Mr. Hamilton—not that he had been building a tower of Babel, or any other tower that would be a sinful work; but he had been raising up to himself hopes and aspirations which had received as complete and sudden a check that Sunday afternoon as was experienced by those old builders on the Eastern plain. Briefly,—for we have no wish to be mysterious on the subject, and weary the patience of our readers,—from the first day that he had seen Edith he had felt the strongest possible interest in her. By that instinctive sympathy which seems to follow no rule, and be amenable to no law, he had at once pierced below the surface, and taken possession of her confidence. He *knew*, with a certainty that he would have found it difficult to explain, that he understood her, if not perfectly, yet far better than any one else around her; and there is always a peculiar fascination in this. Mr.

Bruce thought her unsettled, and harassed by perplexities and doubts; Edwyn Hamilton knew that she was an infidel, and dissatisfied with her infidelity. He knew that one only question harassed her, and that was not even Pilate's question, "What is truth?" but the still sadder one, "Is there *any* truth, *any* God, *any* revelation?" A clear-sighted, straightforward mind—and Edwyn's was emphatically this—if it sometimes jumps a little hastily at conclusions, generally seizes upon the right ones, and that with a facility very startling to persons of a more calculating nature. He saw also that she dared not confess this; that she would endure any mental agony rather than own her suffering; that the physician must offer himself, or she would never come to him; and offer himself with the most consummate tact and delicacy, or she would spurn his suggestions as an intrusion and an impertinence. Edwyn was very humble; he knew that this was both a difficult and a dangerous task, and he shrank at first from the idea that it was imposed upon him: but the more he saw of Edith, the more he became conscious of his own influence over her: and at last it seemed so clearly to him a duty to use this influence, that he put aside all scruples, and set himself heart and soul to the task. He little knew then in what he was involving, or to what he was pledging, himself, when he solemnly vowed to God never to rest till he had brought this poor wandering soul into the faith and the rest of the Catholic Church. Like a wise soldier, he never attempted to conceal from himself the dangers

of his position ; and against the chief of these he armed himself, in all humility, with the greatest possible precaution. Let it be remembered that at this time he honestly thought himself a priest, gifted with the supernatural graces of the priesthood, and let it also be remembered that he was one of those who not only believed, but *acted* on their belief, that the practice of the first eight centuries of Christendom was binding on their consciences ; consequently the idea of marriage was as simply out of the question to him as to any Catholic priest, and he had even made it still more so by a private vow. Are we to blame him if he honestly and humbly trusted to the grace he *thought* he had received as a sufficient protection in any temptation that might arise ? and especially since, as yet, he knew nothing by experience of the insidious subtlety with which it might approach. Of strong passions, perhaps, he did know something ; but let that pass. It was not the question here, or at least he thought not ; and having not one grain of vanity in his nature, it never occurred to him that there was any danger to Edith. Moreover, he thought he had insured an all-sufficient security for them both in the resolution he had made to make his whole aim and work end simply in bringing her under Mr. Bruce's guidance ; he would have nothing to do with her spiritual direction himself, he would only bring her under that of another.

Poor Edwyn ! no doubt he will be well laughed at for his simplicity ; what shall we say for him ? Only this : he was very young, very inexperienced, above all, very unselfish and pure-

mind ; forgive him his mistakes for the sake of that.

He very soon began to find his task neither so simple, so easy, nor so hopeful as he had expected. In the first place, Edith herself began to puzzle him : at first she seemed to find rest and relief in the consciousness (which he took care never to make oppressive) that she was understood ; she threw off disguise, reserve, hauteur, whatever she clothed herself in with others, in her intercourse with him. But after a time this began to change ; it was not that she attempted concealment with him—she *could* not. She knew only too well that he read her through and through ; but it had evidently ceased to be a relief, and begun to be a pain to her ; she began to be shy and nervous with him ; and finally, as we have seen, she took to reading *his* heart instead of quietly letting *him* read *hers*—a change which distressed and perplexed him more than he understood how to account for. Moreover, even on his own ground she baffled him ; he found that he could not satisfy her—she wanted something more certain, more definite than he could give her. He began to realize that nothing short of Rome would satisfy the cravings of her soul ; but the provoking part of the matter was that she always insisted on believing that *he* was unsettled and unsatisfied. His disclaiming it made not the slightest difference ; and at last, as we have seen, she all but accused him of withholding his confidence from her. Then again, all attempts to bring her under Mr. Bruce's influence failed signally ; she always quietly but

steadily refused to consult him on any of the points she occasionally spoke of to Mr. Hamilton; and once even, when he had pressed her somewhat more than usual, she had answered, with a bitterness that surprised him,

"It would be mere waste of time. Mr. Bruce has no better authority to give me than his own judgment, and—well, I suppose he does not himself think *that* infallible; faith must lean upon certainty—at least mine must, if I am to have any. I am rapidly becoming more and more confirmed in an opinion which once seemed to me a mere extravagance."

"What opinion can that be?" asked Mr. Hamilton, whose interest grew painfully excited as he put the question.

"That there is no alternative between Romanism and unbelief; and, as I cannot be a Romanist, it remains"—she stopped short; even *her* straightforwardness shrank from putting it into plain words.

To her astonishment, he did not appear the least shocked, and only said,

"You are putting Romanism for Catholicism. If we can be Catholics, that is enough."

"You think then that Romanists are Catholics *and something more*?"

"I would rather not think about them at all," replied Edwyn.

Edith turned abruptly away, with a choking sensation in her throat; then, as if impelled by some irresistible impulse, she came back and said,

"Mr. Hamilton, if you will go to Benediction at some Catholic church, and then come back

and tell me we can have the same thing here in this church at Fernley, I will believe that we can be Catholics without being Romanists."

On another occasion she had said :

"No; I would trust Mr. Bruce's *heart* to any extent, but not his *head*—he is no logician."

And here perhaps was the real secret of her want of confidence in him; being singularly clear-headed herself, she was peculiarly alive to Mr. Bruce's deficiency in that respect. When she found that he had a great natural difficulty in looking at any subject from another person's point of view, and a positive inability to see both sides of an argument at once with equal clearness, she reluctantly (for after all she would have *liked* to trust him) gave up the attempt to make him understand her. Mr. Hamilton was clear-headed enough, if he would only give himself fair play; Edith saw this, and saw the inevitable result long before he did himself—saw it, and resented it, kicked furiously at it; and, worse even than this, she tried to counteract it by insinuating little fiery darts of subtle scepticism into his mind; if only she might turn him *anyhow*, at *any* cost, away from what she knew would separate him so utterly from herself.

Happily Edwyn was proof against this; proof against it not through superiority of intellect, but by God's grace, through a very simple, childlike habit he had of constantly reciting the Creed as an act of faith; he knew *that* was unquestioned Catholic truth, and he held fast by it, and leaned his whole weight upon it. He knew full well too (and he was one of those few people

who "always practise what they know") that temptations against faith are only to be resisted by flight; and whenever he felt the prick of one of Edith's poisoned shafts, he invariably used the one simple remedy of saying to himself, "I believe in the Holy Ghost." This was no mere form of words to him: he *did* believe in the Holy Ghost, as the Divine infallible Teacher and Guide of the Church; though as yet he saw not clearly how incompatible this belief was with the theory of a divided Church. If at any time it was not enough, he said the "Veni Creator" on his knees. Doubtless it was this firm confidence in the protection and help of the Holy Spirit that obtained for him at last the blessed gift of faith, for most surely He will never leave any one long in perplexity or error who sincerely and humbly trusts in Him.

But we have made a long digression, and must return to Mr. Hamilton where we left him, sitting in his study that Monday morning, with those two notes open before him.

For the first time in his life it had become something more than a possibility, more than a mere suspicion to him that his friend had spoken the truth. How, when, where had this light broken upon him? this is what he now asked himself. To an honest heart, self-examination is a very simple and easy process; we can see well enough, if only we look steadily without blinking and don't mind making our eyes smart a little: he had only to go back to his conversation with Edith the evening before, to her words, "Then you think something necessary to salva-

tion which cannot be obtained in the English Church?" Why had he been so anxious to check those words? He clasped his hands tightly over his eyes; but it was no use, he could not shut it out; he could not shut out the mad thought, "Was it from *her* lips that he was to receive this revelation?" Ay, even so; and yet another revelation—that look, that one momentary glance, what had it done for them both? What had it done for *him*? It was well for him that he had prayed much lately for the grace of interior mortification, else he could never have endured the crushing humiliation of that hour. He had thought himself so strong, so safe in his vow of self-consecration; he had thought it was only from the pure love of souls that he had been striving so earnestly, with his whole heart, to rescue this one from its misery and danger: was it possible he had so utterly deceived himself? Yes, even so; and now what remained? Was he to give up Edith? Give up Edith! what did that mean? How far had he deceived her as well as himself? That look told him only too surely; and how was he now to repair the injury he had done? Could he *honourably* give her up? *Honourably!* he started. What had that to do with it? How about his priesthood and his vow? A sudden flash of intense joy came with the thought of one of these—that at least was no longer any barrier; he was no true priest. But his vow? that surely was binding? Yes, in itself; but the Church had a dispensing power—why should he not use it? Why not be released from a vow made inconsiderately, under false



impressions? Would it not be even better to get rid of all old ties, and begin afresh? Once a Catholic, he would be free, free to begin life over again, untrammelled, unshackled; and then——

“*Stop!*” said conscience, in a voice too clear to be disregarded or silenced.

He did stop. Never yet in the whole course of his life had Edwyn Hamilton deliberately disobeyed that voice. Whatever he had to reproach himself with, he was at least spared this, the most agonizing of all torments.

A sheet of paper lay before him, with the text for his next sermon written at the top: “The love of Christ constraineth us.” He had been going to show how it was not his own love for our Lord, but the love of Jesus for him, which had constrained, pressed, urged, compelled St. Paul to give up all—rank, position, influence, reputation—and to be counted a fool in this world; how thenceforward the love of Jesus became the law of his life, the measure of his self-sacrifice, inspiring him with a fervent, loving generosity, which cold hearts have stigmatised as the puerility of a “weak enthusiast;” how in very truth he held that “if One died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for that all they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them;” how the wound first inflicted by that loving reproach, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *Me*?” was ever bleeding in his heart, so that all other sufferings were as nothing to him in comparison with it. And St. Paul was Edwyn Hamilton’s

chosen patron—the saint whom most of all he desired, however far off, to follow and imitate. What was he doing? what was he going to do now? To become a Catholic through the love of Jesus, which had drawn him out of heresy and schism by the greatest of all gifts, the gift of faith? Yes, surely nothing else but the love of Jesus for him had obtained this grace for his soul. And how was he going to correspond with it? By a life of *less* devotion, *less* severity, *less* entire surrender of himself to his Lord?—by freely following his own inclinations, his own human affections, his own——Enough. His head sank upon the table, and God only saw the struggle that was passed through in the next half-hour; it was sharp, but brief and decisive. There should be no delay now; every hour was of consequence. If he had already compromised Edith, there was but one thing to do; whether that thing was or was not in accordance with “conventional propriety” he did not for a moment stay to consider; it was his duty, and that was enough. He must see her, and tell her straightforwardly the simple truth; then, without another day’s delay, leave Fernley, seek admission into the Church, and put himself at once under obedience with regard to his future course.

“What!” suggested the devil; “leave your uncle without a curate at a day’s notice, and with the whole work of the parish on his hands? Tell Miss Sydney coolly you can have nothing more to do with her, after trifling with her feelings, and stealing her heart in such an unwar-

rantable way? Is this the morality your new religion teaches you?"

Yes, all this, and much more than this if need be, unless our Lord has revoked His "cannot be My disciple." But had he trifled with Edith? Not deliberately, not intentionally; and whatever fault he had committed involuntarily he was all the more bound to repair without delay.

Edwyn Hamilton was not one to shrink from any duty; but it must be confessed he looked forward with the greatest possible dread to what he might have to go through during the next few days. Perhaps it was just as well that he could not at that moment go on thinking about it any longer.

A low tap at his door, which he had not heard, and consequently not answered, was followed by the entrance of his sister.

"Why, Edwyn!" she exclaimed, putting her face down close to his on the table; "you lazy fellow! I do believe you have been fast asleep. I beg pardon for disturbing your pleasant dreams."

Fast asleep! pleasant dreams! Poor Mary, how little she knew! He roused himself at once—it was no time just then for explanations—and said in his usual bright, affectionate manner,

"I don't plead guilty this time, Mary; but what is it, dear? Do you want anything?"

Mary burst into a merry laugh.

"O! not guilty, indeed! A very fine story, when the dinner-bell has rung twice; and you coolly ask what is it, and if I want anything! Do *you* want your dinner, or shall I go back

and tell uncle Walter that you are most particularly engaged just now, and can't possibly come to it?"

"Dinner! O, dear!" said Edwyn, feeling just then as if the first mouthful he swallowed would choke him. "Yes, I will come directly. Ask uncle Walter not to wait; I will not be more than two minutes after you."

Nor was he; but in those two minutes he had made a resolution, offered it to God, and prayed for strength to keep it.



## CHAPTER XXV.

A sound of church bells on a working day,  
A cross amid a crowded market-place,  
That, like a benediction, seemed to lay  
On all that restless throng a spell of grace,—  
E'en such, dear friend, hath been the thought of thee.  
T. WHYTEHEAD.

THE first thing that greeted Edwyn Hamilton on his arrival in the dining-room was a note in Edith's handwriting laid open by the side of his plate—the same we saw her write to Mr. Bruce two hours ago, containing the invitation for that day week.

He took it up, read it, re-read it, and kept his eyes fixed upon it so long, that at last Mary exclaimed:

"Is there some mystery only to be spelt out by the initiated? You look at it as if it were a

summons to a court-martial, instead of an invitation to a music-party."

Edwyn put down the note with perfect composure, saying :

"Not at all ; I was only thinking whether I could go."

"Why, what in the world should hinder you ? Next Monday,—why, let me see, it's not a fast-day, nor a vigil, nor anything, and we need not go till after evening service ; is it some confirmation class ? surely you might change the day for once if it is."

"No, I believe Monday is a free night so far," he replied.

"Have you planned some private expedition for that particular night, then ? We shall begin to be suspicious !"

Mr. Bruce, who had for some little time past seen more than he had ever let it appear that he did, wisely thinking that in such a case the non-intervention principle was the best, though lately the subject had been a very anxious one to him, saved his nephew the trouble of replying by saying to him :

"Never mind, Edwyn ; there is no hurry about sending an answer immediately. I was going to ask you to walk with me to Pounsford Farm this afternoon, and we can talk it over as we go."

"Thank you," replied Edwyn, in rather a marked tone, "that will just suit me."

"My dear uncle," he began the first moment they had started on their walk, "I am afraid I am going to startle you very much ; but I feel bound not to delay telling you at once, honestly,

that I am quite convinced of the necessity of submission to the Church of Rome, and I dare not put it off any longer."

He spoke rapidly, but in a mechanical tone, as if he were saying off a lesson by heart.

Mr. Bruce turned and looked at him as if the words conveyed no distinct meaning to his mind, and said slowly :

"What do you mean, Edwyn?"

This was rather hard ; when one has made a painful statement with considerable difficulty, it is cruel to be driven back into an explanation of it. But Mr. Hamilton attempted no explanation ; he only said :

"I mean that I cannot remain any longer in the English Church."

Certainly words could not well be plainer ; but Mr. Bruce had heard such words before from persons who had spoken them in some temporary excitement or mere fit of ill-temper, and who nevertheless showed no immediate disposition to act upon them. He knew his nephew's natural impetuosity, and thought that he was merely wearied and disgusted with some of the numerous "difficulties" which are the perpetual torment of Anglicans ; and he replied with a calmness which greatly surprised Edwyn.

"What has brought you to this conclusion just now?"

"Chiefly," he answered, "the conviction that I ought to have arrived at it long ago ; but I do not know *why* I did not, or *why* things should seem unmistakably clear to me now which were

dark and doubtful up to even a few hours ago. I cannot tell *why*," he repeated in a low voice, as a keen sense of his own unworthiness of such a great grace pressed upon him; "I only know God has revealed it to me now, and I dare not disobey, or shrink, or hesitate."

"Edwyn, do you know what you are saying? do you mean that you have had some supernatural vision or direct revelation from God within the last few hours? Take care; the devil has power to send fearful delusions, and at least it would be more humble to distrust yourself in such a case."

Poor Edwyn felt sadly distressed.

"O no," he said, "I do not mean that at all; these things are only for saints—I mean—" he hesitated from sheer ignorance what to say. A Catholic could have told him at once that the light of faith had broken in upon his soul, and that the gift of faith had been vouchsafed to him; but he understood nothing more as yet himself of the change that had passed over him than that he *saw* the truth, and must submit to it at the peril of his soul's salvation. Words not his own came to his lips, and he spoke them literally because he could not help it. "*How He has opened my eyes I know not; this I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.*"

Mr. Bruce knew his nephew too well to suspect him of the slightest shadow of fanaticism or unreality, and did not know what to make of the evident strength of a conviction which seemed to him to rest on no foundation whatever.

"I do not understand you," he said. "Have

you no logical grounds for your faith? For instance, why should you throw the Greek Church overboard for the sake of the Roman doctrine of the supremacy of the Pope?"

Probably this was a question which had never presented itself to Mr. Hamilton's mind, for he replied with the most perfect indifference,

"I really can't help the Greek Church."

"Of course you can't," Mr. Bruce answered, slightly amazed at what seemed to him the flippancy of his nephew's remark; "but it is rather an awkward fact for the Roman theory to deal with. How do you get over it?"

Mr. Hamilton could scarcely help smiling at the gravity with which this objection was brought forward; but he was very anxious if possible not in any way to wound his uncle's feelings, and he replied as gravely as he had been asked,

"I do not see how it is at all a more awkward fact than the existence of the Anglican Church; if to be out of communion with Rome is to be in schism, both are precisely in the same position."

"But the Church of Rome acknowledges the orders of the Greek Church," said Mr. Bruce.

"Doubtless she does, and if clear historical evidence is ever found to prove it, I suppose she would equally acknowledge ours," replied Mr. Hamilton, with perfect calmness.

"And even this does not satisfy you!" exclaimed Mr. Bruce, in real amazement.

"It does not the least affect the question, to my mind," said Mr. Hamilton; "except," he added, as a sudden thought struck him, "that the very fact of the Greek Church being schis-



matic in spite of the acknowledgment of her orders is the strongest possible proof that the validity or non-validity of ours is a question not worth a moment's consideration."

"But you are begging the question, Edwyn. You take for granted that the Greek Church is schismatic: you cannot prove it; you have only the word of the Church of Rome for it."

Mr. Hamilton turned, and, looking fixedly at his uncle, said,

"No, that is all: only the word of the Church of Rome—only the voice of the Holy Ghost. What can I want more?"

He spoke so solemnly, that Mr. Bruce felt at once that his words came from a settled deep conviction too strong to be resisted. He did not attempt to answer them—he knew only too well that he had no answer to give, however unable he might be to understand them; and he only said,

"But you will take full time for consideration? you will not act hastily? you will study the subject carefully first?"

"I *have* studied, I *have* considered," replied Edwyn, calmly; "there is nothing left for me now but to act."

"You *have* considered? Edwyn, are you going to stake your soul's salvation, and a question not of time but of eternity, on a conviction arrived at within the last few hours only? At least give yourself a little more time."

"I dare not."

It was said in a tone admitting of no appeal,

and Mr. Bruce could only ask how soon he proposed leaving Fernley.

"To-morrow," was the brief reply ; and there was a pause of some moments.

Mr. Hamilton was the first to break the silence.

"My dear uncle," he said, "I know I must seem to you to be acting very hastily and inconsiderately ; I do assure you nothing but the very strongest conviction of necessity would induce me to leave you in this way. If I could only honestly stay and help you till some one else could take my place, you know how gladly I would ; but I am sure you could not yourself wish me to do so under present circumstances."

"Help me ! O, don't think about that ; there is not more work here than I can manage perfectly well ; you know I was without a curate for a long time till you came to me. But it is hard to lose you so, and so suddenly too ; you don't know how I have loved you, Edwyn."

Mr. Bruce's voice trembled, and Edwyn, to whom there could be no greater trial than being forced to give pain to another, had some difficulty in commanding himself sufficiently to say,

"It could not be more than I love you ; but I am sure we shall not be long separated—you will soon come too."

"I think not ; but we will not dwell upon that. Have you any idea what you are going to do after to-morrow ?"

"Not the very slightest ; I shall be guided entirely by what I am recommended to do after I am received."

"Does Mary know anything ? she could not

from her manner just now at dinner. It will be a dreadful shock to her, poor child; you should not have let it come so suddenly upon her, Edwyn."

"Yes, I am very sorry, but I could not help it; Mary never seemed to have the shadow of a doubt, and I was afraid to suggest it to her mind. I see differently now," replied Mr. Hamilton, speaking slowly and deliberately; "I must tell Mary this evening, and also call upon Miss Sydney."

Mr. Bruce turned round suddenly and sharply.

"Edwyn," he said, very gravely, "what are you doing with Edith Sydney?"

Edwyn looked up and met his uncle's gaze with the unflinching steadiness of conscious rectitude.

"Nothing," he replied emphatically; "but we have talked of these subjects sometimes, and I should like to tell her my decision myself before I go; besides it would be uncourteous not to see her again."

To speak the truth for himself, and to spare Edith, he said these words in a quiet simple manner.

Mr. Bruce perhaps understood and appreciated them—at all events he had the fullest confidence in their integrity, and yet he continued to fix a painfully inquiring gaze upon his nephew.

"Forgive me if I spoke hastily," he said, after a few moments' pause; "but you know Edith was specially confided to my care by her dying mother, and I cannot help feeling anxious about anything that might unsettle her faith."

"I have never said a word to unsettle her faith," broke in Mr. Hamilton, forgetting for a moment to restrain his natural impatience.

"My dear boy, I do not accuse you of it," Mr. Bruce answered calmly; "but you say you have talked together on the subject. That in itself is unsettling; and besides——"

Once more Edwyn broke in, but this time more calmly.

"My dear uncle," he said, "I need hardly tell you that I hope, before long, to be a priest; any other life would be misery to me."

"Before long! O, Edwyn!" was all Mr. Bruce could say; but he fully comprehended why this announcement had been made to him, and felt grateful for it.

As they came home, Mr. Bruce said,

"If you are going on to Clare Hall now, would you like me to speak to Mary before you see her?"

"O, thank you,—thank you very much," replied Edwyn, evidently greatly relieved; "only I could not bear her to think me unkind, and perhaps——"

"No, no, leave that to me; I will take care she does not."

And so they parted at the lodge gate of Clare Hall, and went each his separate way. Mr. Hamilton walked slowly through the park, thinking calmly of what he was going to say. Now that the decisive moment had come, he was surprised to find himself so little agitated; a feeling of rest and peace of mind had come upon him, strangely inconsistent with the sharp trial to

human weakness and human affection for which he was preparing himself. What did it mean? had he already begun to love Edith less? was the pain of separation becoming less bitter? No, not that—far, far from it; but the sacrifice was accepted, and supernatural strength for its accomplishment was flowing in upon his soul.

As he approached the house, he began to wonder how he should contrive to see Edith alone without exciting suspicion, and had not at all made up his mind on the point when he rang the bell. Chance, however (if it can ever be right to use the word), settled this difficulty for him.

“The ladies are dressing for dinner, sir,” was the reply to his inquiry for Miss Sydney.

He sent in his card with a polite but formal message to the effect that he should be much obliged if Miss Sydney would speak to him for a few minutes; he could wait, or call again in the course of the evening. He knew he might safely trust now to seeing her alone.

He had not long to wait for an answer.

“Miss Sydney will be down directly, sir; will you please to walk in here?” and he was ushered into a room that had been Sir Charles Sydney’s study, but was now seldom used.

And meanwhile what of Edith? Hers was not a character to be easily taken by surprise. She was too far-sighted, too much in the habit of looking all possible contingencies boldly in the face, and, above all, too intuitive by nature. She knew in a moment what had happened; she was not startled, and all other feeling she

crushed down with a strong hand till she could give way to it freely. On her way down she knocked at Agnes's door, and being admitted, said very quietly :

"Will you ask my aunt not to wait dinner for me? Mr. Hamilton wants to see me on some business, and I may be detained."

Before Agnes had time to answer she was gone. Even with Edith self-control had its limits; she dared not delay or give herself time to think.

Edwyn Hamilton was standing with his back to the door when she entered; he turned round and gave her his hand, but without raising his eyes.

"Miss Sydney," he began, "I have something to tell you——"

"I know it," she broke in, looking for a moment fixedly at him, and then shading her eyes with her hand.

"You know it! *what* do you know?" he exclaimed. Poor man, he was not so much in the habit of wearing mental armour as Edith was, and had not buckled it on so carefully.

She spoke slowly, in a strained, unnatural voice.

"I know you have made up your mind to be a Catholic; I knew yesterday it must be so very soon; I knew that with you to see the truth and to obey it would be the same thing. You are surprised? you did not wish me to understand you?" she added suddenly, with a vague fear, totally new to her, that he might think it un-

maidenly in her to have read more in his words than they had literally expressed.

She was wholly unprepared for his reply, and the look of joy which accompanied it.

"Thank God that *you* too call it the truth!" he said fervently. "I ought not to be surprised; I ought to have known how much more readily simpler and purer minds would see it."

Simpler and purer minds! Edith started. She longed to throw herself on the floor at his feet, and entreat him not to mock her with such words; but her impulsive nature had long been forced to submit to the sharp curb she was always torturing it with, and she spoke calmly:

"You are forgetting what you came to tell me. I should like to hear all about it. When do you go?"

He looked up. Was it possible that he had been mistaken in her? could she have said those cold heartless words so calmly if—ah, how little he knew of the generosity of a woman's love! Edith thought she could spare him the self-reproach of thinking he had caused her pain; and if she could spare him anything, she cared not what it might cost her. What matter breaking her own heart, if by doing so she could hope there would be one suffering the less in his?

"To-morrow."

Edith sat motionless and rigid, her fingers tightly clasped together, her eyes fixed upon him with an expression of more utter despair than he had ever seen before.

"Edith! for God's sake, speak to me!" he exclaimed, with a sudden impulse kneeling at her side, and taking both her hands in his; they were cold as marble. It was the first time he had ever called her by her Christian name. She knew now the full meaning of that look the day before, and even in her misery it gave her a thrill of joy unspeakable. But what had she done? betrayed what for *his* sake she had been so anxious to conceal? Yes, it was all over now; she had trusted in her own strength, and it had failed. She did not speak, but she made no attempt to withdraw her hands.

But Edwyn could be generous too, and with a nobler kind of generosity: he spoke very simply and calmly.

"Listen to me, Edith," he said; "it is better for us both now to be quite truthful, quite unreserved" (her eyes half closed, and a very few large, hot tears fell from them on his hands). "I only knew yesterday how much I love you—how unfaithful I have been to our Lord, to my vow."

Edith pulled her hands away suddenly, and a shudder passed over her whole frame.

"Stop," she exclaimed; "I cannot bear it."

Edwyn made the sign of the cross slowly and reverently: "Yes," he said very gently, "you can—we can both bear it." She was calm instantly, and he went on: "I have deceived you—I have led you to imagine what it would be sin in me even to think of; I have come to ask your pardon before I go to begin a life of reparation and penance."



"My pardon, what do you mean?" exclaimed Edith, her own suffering entirely lost sight of in her compassion for his; then looking steadily at him, she spoke more calmly: "I have nothing to forgive, Edwyn," she said; "*you* have never deceived me—I deceived myself. I always knew how it was—I mean"—She hesitated, then added abruptly, "You will be a holy priest, and God will love you."

There was a strange bitterness in the tone of the last words, as if she grudged him any love but her own.

"Don't say that; I am not holy," he said quickly with the first impulse of his natural simple humility. "Pray for me."

"Pray for you! I can't, Edwyn. God hates me; I don't believe in him; I can't, I *cannot*," she repeated, as if struggling with some inward agony. "I believe nothing, I see nothing—it is all dark."

"I know, I understand," he replied to her great astonishment; "God is putting out all false lights in your soul, that the one true light may shine clearly to you. You do see it, only you are afraid, you turn away."

"For God's sake, spare me!" exclaimed poor Edith; "would you have me become a Catholic for *your* sake?"

Edwyn started, he had never thought of this.

"God forbid!" he said in a low deep tone; then quietly rising, he once more took her hand, saying: "I must go. Tell me you forgive me, and do not forbid me to pray for you."

Edith seemed suddenly to have regained her

self-command and calmness : she stood up, looked at him quite steadily, though he might have noticed her lips tremble, and said :

"Let us forgive each other, then. Perhaps one day, after you are a priest, not before, you will give me your blessing, and tell me if you are happy ;" then, afraid to trust herself another moment, she turned quickly and rang the bell.

"I will, please God," said Edwyn solemnly ; and before the servant could answer the summons he was gone.

A few minutes after Agnes came quietly in, set down a small tray on the table, and without looking at Edith, merely said,

"We have finished, so I thought it would be more comfortable for you here ;" and without waiting for a reply left the room.

"My dear, what shall we do about tea ?" Miss Brooke remarked, as it began to get late in the evening. "I think Edith must have gone to sleep in the study and forgotten all about it ; would you mind going to see ? I know she will not mind *your* disturbing her."

Agnes did not feel by any means so sure of this ; however, having no reasonable excuse to give for refusing, she went. To all appearance Miss Brooke had not been so far wrong : Edith was leaning back in her chair, with her eyes closed ; her hands were clasped tightly together. As for her dinner, she had taken the wine and the bread ; nothing else had been touched. Agnes stooped over her, and gently kissed her forehead, saying,

"It is getting late, dear."

Edith opened her eyes. Evidently not from *sleep*, and yet it was in an absent, dreamy tone that she said,

"Yes, I know; I am coming."

As she rose, her favourite St. Bernard dog, who had been, after his usual fashion, making a footstool of himself at her feet, got up, looked wistfully at her, and rubbed his head caressingly against her hand. She stooped down and suddenly threw both her arms round the creature's neck.

"My poor Carlo!" she said; "but you must go now. Good-night."

Carlo's behaviour to Mr. Hamilton had greatly altered since the first day of their meeting, when he had received him so ungraciously; of late, indeed, he had often, with Edith's full consent, taken long walks alone with him, on his return from which he always came straight to her, as if to report himself.

The evening passed pretty much as usual. Edith made the tea, and talked in a matter-of-fact way, on ordinary subjects, almost without intermission; she seemed nervously anxious to prevent any pause in the conversation.

That night, about half an hour after they had left the drawing-room, Agnes was surprised by a knock at her door, followed by the entrance of Edith in her dressing-gown.

"Are those invitations gone that you wrote for me this morning?" she asked.

"Yes; they all went by the post this afternoon. I am very sorry if—"

"No, no, no matter; it is quite right; for next

Monday, were they not? You will not go before that?"

It was said in an imploring tone, and Agnes warmly assured her that she had quite decided to remain with her till the middle of the following week.

"Agnes," said Edith, in a firm determined tone, "Mr. Hamilton is going to be received into the Church of Rome to-morrow; he will soon be a Catholic priest: that is what he came to tell me. If you should ever hear any other motive suggested for his leaving Fernley so suddenly, contradict it most positively on my authority. I suppose *you* know from your own experience that a strong conviction may come suddenly at the last, and that to a clear conscience to *know* a thing is to *do* it."

She little knew of the sting, keen and piercing, contained in her last words, and was utterly confounded to see Agnes, without a moment's warning, fall flat upon the floor in a dead faint. In that same moment—for jealousy is quick and vivid as lightning—she had asked and answered herself one question satisfactorily: it was clearly *not* the *first* part of her speech that had caused this emotion, and further she did not care to ask. Perhaps Agnes's unvarying kindness and thoughtfulness had touched Edith's heart, or perhaps the last few hours had broken down something in the hardness of her nature; at all events she did what she would never have thought of doing before—instead of summoning a maid, she lifted Agnes, heavy as she was in that state, in her arms, laid her on the bed, and treated her as

tenderly as Sœur Rosalie had done, never leaving her till she had watched her sink into a quiet natural sleep. But neither of them spoke again that night, nor did either of them ever again refer to what had then passed; only it had drawn them closer together.

The next morning Miss Brooke exclaimed,

"My dear Agnes, how well you are looking; I have not seen you so like your old self since you came here."

Edith looked up and quite started to see Agnes's brilliant colour and flashing eyes; but she instinctively felt, though without understanding *why*, that they were not signs of health.

"Thank you, I feel very well," was the only reply.

After breakfast she asked Edith if she could send her to the station, saying she was obliged to go to Birmingham, but would return in the evening.

"To Birmingham!" repeated Edith thoughtfully; then, feeling she had no right to ask any questions, she said, "Of course you shall have the carriage; but you had better not go alone. Let me send Annette with you; you can dispose of her as you like whilst you are engaged."

"Thank you, you are very good; but it would be very dull work for Annette, and I should really prefer being alone," replied Agnes, who felt by no means inclined to have any witness to her proceedings that day.

"Very well," said Edith, quite appreciating the wish to be alone under certain circumstances; "then the carriage can stay at Harford, and you

have only to order it to meet whatever train you return by."

Agnes might well wish to be alone. She had already gone through one severe struggle that morning. She had asked herself honestly *why* she was deliberately intending to remain another ten days out of the Church; what right she had to trifle with God because she had a fancy to be received by some particular priest. Her present act was a proof that she had answered herself honestly, and she knew that she had another and a sharper trial before her.

"Gone to Birmingham all by herself! good gracious!" exclaimed Miss Brooke, when Edith bluntly announced the fact to her at luncheon.

"My dear, has she any friends there?"

"I don't know; I did not ask her."

"H'm! very strange, very improper," muttered Miss Brooke. "Why didn't you tell me of it sooner, my dear?"

Edith felt strongly tempted to say, "Because it was no business of yours;" but she restrained herself, and replied,

"Because I didn't think it signified."

"Well, I only hope she will come safe back again," sighed Miss Brooke; for which charitable aspiration she was rewarded by an indignant look from Edith.

Agnes did come back safely, rather late in the evening. She quietly set aside all questions and insinuations by simply stating that she had business which could not be deferred; but she followed Edith to her room, and as she wished her good-night, said quite calmly,

"I am a Catholic now, dear Edith, thank God !"

Edith spoke not a word, but for the first time in her life she kissed her.

No one ever knew how Edith passed that night ; but the next morning she complained of a violent headache, and did not leave her room. Before night she was in an alarming state of brain-fever.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

Yes ; deep within, and deeper yet  
The rankling shaft of conscience hide.  
Quick let the swelling eye forget  
The tears that in the heart abide ;  
Calm be the voice, the aspect bold,  
No shuddering pass o'er lip or brow ;  
For why should Innocence be told  
The pangs that guilty spirits bow ?

*Christian Year.*

A WHOLE year has passed since the events recorded in the last chapter, and the party we left at Clare Hall, with the addition of Mr. and Mrs. Lyle, are just now assembled at the Patterdale Hotel, during the last week of a tour among the English lakes. Mr. Lyle, after a short burst of indignation at his daughter's conduct, had soon come to the conclusion, that, after all, Popery was not much worse than Puseyism ; and he was very soon compelled to acknowledge that Agnes was not only far better in health and spirits, but much more useful in the house and a more agreeable

companion, than when she was "always cantering after that fellow Nugent."

And what of Edith? Her recovery was very slow and lingering, and for some time it was even feared that the violence of the attack had left some permanent effect upon her brain. She never refused to see Mr. Bruce; on the contrary, she often sent for him, if more than a few days passed without his coming to see her; but she would neither allow him to read to her, pray with her, nor offer her the slightest spiritual help or consolation of any kind.

At first he attributed this entirely to physical weakness; but after about three months, when she was evidently stronger, he ventured one day to ask her why she so resolutely rejected his "ministrations as a priest."

"Because I don't believe in them," was the answer, given bluntly, without a moment's hesitation.

"You believe in prayer, do you not, dear child?" he replied, very gently.

"Perhaps—I don't know. Please, don't talk to me about it."

"My poor child, will you not let me comfort you?"

"You *cannot*; no one can," was the reply.

"Our Lord can. He is infinite Love and infinite Power; and He says to all, 'Come to Me, and I will give you rest.'"

Edith raised herself on her couch, looked steadily at Mr. Bruce, and said:

"Do you ever examine your conscience?"

A somewhat startling question under the cir-



cumstances, and Mr. Bruce might be pardoned for thinking it strangely irrelevant ; he, however, answered quietly :

“ I hope so.”

“ And what would you do if you saw two paths before you, either of which would lead to the destruction of your soul ?”

“ Avoid them both,” he replied. “ Surely that is too plain to need saying.”

“ Ah, but suppose—suppose one of them is the only way to heaven ?”

“ Then it *cannot* lead to destruction. My dear Edith, you are suffering from some strange delusion, or morbid fancy ; will you not speak more openly to me ?”

“ I *have* spoken openly,” said Edith wearily. “ I have told you that the only way to heaven is closed to me—I can’t say more ; and you see, now, you can’t comfort me, so don’t try any more.”

“ Believe me,” he said earnestly, “ you would find relief if you could confess whatever is on your mind.”

“ Very likely,” she replied in a dogged tone.

“ Then, why not ?”

“ Mr. Bruce, this is useless,” she interrupted. “ I don’t believe in Anglican Sacraments, and I am not a Catholic.”

He was silent a few moments, then said :

“ Do you believe in Catholic Sacraments ?”

“ Whether I do or not, I shall never have them, so it doesn’t matter.”

“ Edith ! what do you mean ?” he asked, quite sternly this time.

"Don't ask me : you had better not," she replied.

"Don't be afraid of me, my child," he said, very kindly. "If you do not believe that we have true Sacraments, it is far better you should go where you feel sure of them."

"I shall stay where I am," replied Edith. "I can't be a Catholic, so I must do without a religion."

"Why *cannot* you be a Catholic?"

Edith started from her seat, paced rapidly up and down the room a few times, then, standing before Mr. Bruce, said imploringly :

"Never ask me that question again."

She was evidently too much excited and exhausted for any further conversation then, and he left her.

From that day forward she never suffered the subject of religion to be mentioned before her. Whenever Mr. Bruce attempted it (as he did constantly at intervals, in the hope of some day gaining a hearing), she stopped him with a few very decisive words, to the effect that this must be a sealed book between them ; and much as he felt distressed, he could find no remedy for so sad a state of things.

For the mere sake of appearances, she always went to church on Sundays ; but it was a terrible penance to her, for Mr. Bruce preached vigorously on subjects that cut like double-edged swords into her soul. It was a great relief to Miss Brooke that Edith was so decidedly *not* a Purseyite, and she congratulated herself on this proof that "that poor foolish Mr. Hamilton had done

her no harm after all." But it puzzled and disturbed her that she would never now "take the Sacrament," especially as Edith never vouchsafed to assign any motive for her obstinacy in this respect.

Things were in this state when they accepted an invitation to spend a few weeks with the Lyles at the English lakes. Edith had rather dreaded meeting Agnes again; but as yet the difficulties had been much fewer than she expected. She kept her opinions (whatever they were) to herself, and Agnes was not given to obtruding hers, unasked for, though she never shrank from avowing them boldly, when circumstances required it.

"I hate prudence!" exclaimed Edith one evening, in reply to some remark that had been made.

"I am sorry to hear you say so," said Mr. Lyle, "for you will find it a very necessary attainment."

"Indeed! why so?"

"Because with the large fortune you will soon have at your own disposal, you will especially require it."

"O! is that all?" replied Edith.

"You seem to forget," said Mr. Lyle, "that a large property involves serious duties and heavy responsibilities."

"And you think prudence will help me through with them? I am sorry to differ from you, but I happen to be of precisely the contrary opinion."

"Well," said Mr. Lyle, "I can only hope

you will alter your opinion in the course of the next year and a half."

The subject dropped, and no one seemed inclined to renew it then; but the next morning, after breakfast, Edith asked Mr. Lyle if he could allow her half an hour's private conversation with him, "*on business*," she added emphatically.

"Certainly," he replied, a good deal surprised, however, at the request.

"Will you come for a walk, then?" she said; "it is a lovely morning."

A stroll by the lake was not exactly Mr. Lyle's notion of a private interview on business; however, he generally found it best to treat Edith like a high-couraged horse, and *give her her head*. So he made no difficulty. The truth was, Edith had a sort of restless craving for being always in action of some kind; sitting still was torture to her.

"Mr. Lyle," she began, in a cold, business-like tone, "you alluded yesterday to my fortune; will you be good enough to inform me of its exact amount?"

"As nearly as I can calculate, it will bring you in an income of about 13,000*l.* a year; it has, of course, been accumulating ever since your father's death."

"And is it unencumbered? I mean, did my father leave any debts?"

Some very considerable ones, but they were all paid by Lady Sydney before her death."

Lady Sydney! was this the only name he could give to his sister? Edith felt a savage

inclination to knock him down; any disrespect or slight to her mother half-maddened her; but now she had a definite end in view, and would let nothing interfere with it.

"Is it at my own absolute disposal? Can I bequeath it to any one I please?"

"Certainly not; your children must inherit it."

"And supposing I do not marry?" It was said in the most matter-of-fact tone possible.

"Come, come," said Mr. Lyle; "we need not suppose impossibilities or absurdities; you know well enough that in your position you will only have to choose for yourself among your suitors."

"Will you have the goodness to answer my question?" replied Edith coldly, and in a tone of offended dignity.

Mr. Lyle saw she was not to be trifled with; and as, whatever else he might be, he was at all events a gentleman, he replied:

"In that case it must all go to the next heir-at-law."

"And who may that be?"

"The greatest scamp in creation, Harry Vincent by name—a distant cousin, a fellow who would gamble away double the property in six months. I tell you, Edith, you are *bound* to marry, if it were only to keep it out of his hands."

"An excellent motive, no doubt! I confess it would never have occurred to me," replied Edith, with an indignant heightening of colour, which Mr. Lyle did not the least comprehend.

"Harry Vincent! it is a good name; I don't believe he is so bad as you say."

"A good name! what nonsense you talk, Edith! as if a man's character depended on his name! If you are talking to me seriously, in Heaven's name be reasonable."

"Don't swear, please; I don't like it," said Edith, very composedly; "but just tell me quietly all you know of this Harry Vincent."

"Tell *you* all I know of Harry Vincent!" exclaimed Mr. Lyle. "I will tell you this, Edith: he has been the curse of every man and the ruin of every woman who ever knew him; and now don't ask any more questions about what does not concern you."

"It *does* concern me," was the prompt reply; "tell me how long it is since you have seen or heard anything of him?"

"Eight years."

Edith gave her uncle a searching look.

"You have heard absolutely *nothing* of him for eight years?" she said. "You have no idea what he has been doing since then, or what has become of him?"

"Not the very slightest."

"Can you find out?"

"Find out all the doings of a thorough-paced villain for the last eight years! what on earth would be the use of that?"

"He may be very different now; eight years is a long time ago; he may be quite reformed."

Mr. Lyle gave short, disagreeable laugh, as he said:

"Just take my advice, Edith, and don't talk about what you don't understand."

"Where was Mr. Vincent when you last heard of him?" persisted Edith, treating his advice with perfect indifference.

"In one of the gambling hells at Baden Baden. Are you satisfied now? will that do for you?"

"Not quite," she replied, with great difficulty keeping her temper; "I must insist upon Mr. Vincent's present address and occupation being discovered."

"Good gracious, Edith! are you mad? Perhaps," he continued sarcastically, "you wish to marry him and convert him yourself, on the principle that reformed rakes make the best husbands; you had better not; take my word for it, there never was a greater mistake."

"Be so good as not to insult me," said Edith; "but tell me plainly will you, or will you not, undertake to make this discovery for me?"

"Certainly not."

"Very well—thank you—I have no more to say."

They walked silently back to the hotel; but just before they reached it, Edith said:

"Mr. Lyle, you are a clergyman; did you never read St. Augustine's Confessions?"

"No," he replied.

"I wish you would," she said; "perhaps they would make you believe a little more in God, and a little less in the devil."

"Really, Edith, you use very unbecoming language," he replied.

"Is it? Well, I beg your pardon;" and without waiting for more, she retreated to her own room.

Agnes was there waiting to ask if she would join an expedition on the lake, which had just been arranged for that afternoon. She agreed to do so; and after luncheon the party started, consisting of Sir William Grant, his son, and two daughters (who had arrived at Patterdale the evening before), Mr. and Mrs. Lyle, Agnes, Harry, and Edith: Miss Brooke declined going, "the very sight of a boat made her nervous," she said.

"Miss Sydney, I know you can steer: will you take the helm?" asked Sir William Grant, as they embarked.

"If you wish it," she replied; and seating herself in the stern, threw her arm carelessly over the tiller.

"Give way!" exclaimed Mr. Grant, taking the stroke-oar. He had been captain of the boats at Eton, and rather prided himself thereon; he was a little mortified not to be steersman himself, but as they took no boatman, the four gentlemen were required to row. Half-way across the lake a light breeze sprang up; a slender mast, with a small sail wrapped round it, lay in the bottom of the boat, and Mr. Lyle suggested hoisting it. No sooner said than done, but something was amiss with the tackle, and there was no way of securing the sail without tying it.

"O, never mind," said Mr. Grant; "it's safe enough; no danger of squalls to-day; besides,



this boat is a regular old tub, she *can't* capsize."

"No doubt, compared with a Thames outrigger, which is the only craft *you* know much about, I suspect," said his father; "but I should be sorry to warrant her for safety in a squall; however, I don't believe we shall run any risk now, so here goes;" and in another minute the sail was firmly tied down.

Edith looked up at the sky, a slight smile curled her lip. She did not speak, but taking a large clasp-knife from her pocket, laid it with the blade open upon her lap.

"Well done, Edith! I thought you hated prudence," exclaimed Mr. Lyle: "are you preparing already to cut away the sail in case of a storm?"

Edith gave him a defiant look; for a moment she seemed about to shut up the knife, but, leaving it in its former position, she merely said:

"I have not the slightest expectation of a storm."

Agnes, who had noticed lately that Edith had become strangely nervous, though she took every possible pains to conceal it, asked her in a low voice if anything was the matter.

"Nothing yet," replied Edith with a peculiar accent on the last word; and at the same time steering for the most open part of the lake.

"Keep her closer in shore. I want to see the formation of those rocks, and we might as well be in the English Channel as here," said Sir William Grant.

Edith looked at the rocks, at the sky, and then at him.

"Are you in command of this boat, or am I?" she asked.

Sir William made her a formal bow, saying with a laugh :

"I believe I have that honour."

The helm was at once put about, the little skiff shot rapidly towards the shore, and Edith said in a marked tone :

"Then of course I obey my superior officer ; *he* must be responsible for the consequences."

"O certainly, of course. I am glad you are so well acquainted with naval discipline," replied Sir William in a tone of mock courtesy.

A triumphant glance shot from Edith's eyes, but she made no reply, and soon they were gliding swiftly under the rocks, scarcely twenty yards from shore. The sail alternately flapped and strained, for the wind was no longer steady, but came in short, fitful gusts ; and presently, as they passed a deep cleft in the rocks, one of these rushed through it with such sudden violence that in another moment it would have been all over with them.

"Helm up !" shouted Sir William Grant.

"Put her head to the wind !" exclaimed Mr. Lyle ; while Mr. Grant, seizing the mast, muttered,

"Confound the sail !"

But Edith had not waited this time for orders. Leaning forward, she cut the rope which tied the sail with one hand, while with the other she sent the boat's head round with a sudden jerk.

There was a shock, a grating sound, but the little craft had righted itself.

"Let it go! throw it overboard!" she exclaimed, as Mr. Grant was about to lay the mast down in the boat.

He obeyed mechanically, as people always do obey a superior mind in times of real danger, but he could not understand what she meant. She was sitting in a rigid posture, her face ghastly pale, her eyes looking as if about to start from their sockets, and fixed eagerly on the opposite shore, some two miles distant.

"Row hard, for your lives!" she said; "the others must bale out the water as fast as they can. We *may* get across before we are swamped. I will keep her head steady."

It was too true. They all saw now what Edith at first had been the only one to perceive—that grating sound had been the sharp point of a sunken rock; the boat had sprung a leak, and the water was coming in fast. Luckily there were several articles that could be used for baling it out, and all the ladies worked hard, too really frightened either to talk, scream, or faint.

Edith was true to her word. The boat's head never swerved a hair's-breadth from the point for which she was making. She knew well that every moment was of the most anxious importance. Once, only for a moment, her eyes relaxed their fixed stare. It was when she felt their speed slackening; poor Sir William Grant's strength was becoming exhausted.

"Miss Grant, take your father's oar," she said.

Miss Grant, a strong, "muscular" girl, obeyed silently; Sir William took her place in baling out the water, and not another word was spoken. The water gained rapidly in the boat, and the additional weight added fearfully to the fatigue of the rowers.

"Pull harder!" exclaimed Edith suddenly; "two minutes more, and we shall be safe!"

And in less than two minutes the boat was driven high up on the shore, the water pouring out of her stern.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Sir William Grant fervently, as he sprang out, and lifted Edith from her watery seat.

She said nothing, but stood watching the others, with the water dripping from her. They were about three miles from Patterdale, and no house near.

"You had better all wrap yourselves up in these coats and cloaks as well as you can. I will walk on to the hotel, and send a carriage for you," said Sir William.

Edith immediately declared she would walk with him; to have sat still then with nothing to do would have been quite intolerable to her. He looked at her drenched clothes in some dismay.

"Yes, I know," she said, "I am not very presentable, but I am less likely to catch cold walking. You had better let me go."

This was true enough, and no further opposition was made. They walked very quickly, and for the first two miles neither spoke; then he said:

"Miss Sydney, can you ever forgive me?"

She started violently.

"Forgive you!" she exclaimed; "it was all my doing."

"*Your* doing! What do you mean? It was my confounded folly in letting the sail be tied, and then driving you right into the wind's teeth. I had no idea of the blasts through those chasms."

"But I had," replied Edith; "only—" She stopped, panting for breath; then, leaning upon his arm, and walking on, she continued: "I can't talk any more now."

She followed him into the bar at the hotel, and stood leaning against the back of a chair while he gave the order for the carriage; then he turned round, and asked what he could do for her, wondering that she had not gone upstairs.

"Nothing, thank you," she said; but even as she spoke she grasped the chair tightly for support, and would have fallen, if he had not caught her in his arms. He carried her as tenderly as a nurse to her room, laid her on the bed, and sent her maid to her.

Meanwhile she was being fiercely abused by the two Misses Grant, who declared it was all her fault; and for their parts they believed she had done it on purpose to frighten them all out of their senses.

"She can't have any feeling," said Miss Mabella, "or she could never have set off to walk three miles. I'm sure I feel trembling all over, and ready to faint."

Had Edith no feeling? Her maid very soon

restored her to her senses, and she then begged to be left alone. What would Mabella Grant have said if she had seen her then—her heart beating violently, her pulse above 90, her hands like burning coals, and her head in a wild fury of pain? Suddenly she clasped her hands tightly round it, and exclaimed:

“Good God! is this madness?”

It might have been, or, at all events, it might have been another attack of brain fever; but, happily, the overstrained chord snapped, and she fainted.

This time she was not so easily restored; it was some hours after that, slowly opening her eyes, she saw Agnes seated by the bed. She closed them again, and remained for half an hour silent and still, but perfectly conscious. Then she called Agnes gently, but stopped her when she was going to speak by saying quite calmly:

“I know—I remember everything; I am quite well now. But you? why don’t you go to bed, Agnes? Go and rest.”

“I *am* resting, dear, and I will go to bed presently. But let me give you this now; you will feel very weak when you try to get up.”

Edith took what was offered her, and drank it without making any difficulty; then she asked what time it was.

“About four, I think; you must try to go to sleep again,” Agnes said.

Edith sat up in the bed, and looked at her cousin.

“You must promise me something first, then,”

she said. "I want to see a priest; take me to the nearest you can find to-morrow."

Agnes looked anxiously at her, seriously thinking her mind must be wandering.

Edith smiled.

"I know what I am saying," she said, "and I mean it. I want to speak to a Catholic priest; where is the nearest one?"

It so happened that one was staying in the hotel. Agnes told her so.

"Bring him to me quickly—as early as possible. Won't he come?" she added, seeing a look of hesitation on Agnes's face.

"No doubt he will, if you send for him; I was only afraid—he is not perhaps quite the sort of person you would like to talk to," she replied, remembering Edith's extreme fastidiousness, and knowing that the priest in question was not overburdened with either education or refinement, though singularly devout and holy.

"What on earth does it signify whether I like him or not?" exclaimed Edith impatiently. "I don't want a *man*, but a *priest*."

Agnes could scarcely help laughing at this very lucid statement, but she took care not to show that she was amused; and merely reminding Edith that they had both better try to sleep now, promised to do as she wished.

The next morning Agnes sent for Father Clarke to speak to her in a small sitting-room which Edith had engaged for herself, and told him of her cousin's wish, adding that she was a Protestant.

"Does she want to be a Catholic?" he asked.

"I don't at all know; she is a very reserved person, and I have no idea why she wishes to see you. But she has had a good deal of suffering lately, and just now especially she has hardly recovered the serious alarm we all had yesterday."

"I see," he said. "I will be careful. You had better send her to me now, if she is ready."

She came in quietly and calmly; but as he made the sign of the cross, and said, "God bless you!" after the first few words of introduction, she drew back, looking frightened.

"God's blessing won't do you any harm, my child," he said, smiling.

She made no reply, but seating herself on a low chair, at a little distance from him, with her head turned away, she said:

"I ought to apologize for troubling you, but would you mind telling me what would be the judgment of the Church in a case I wish to put before you? Do you object to give an opinion to any one who is not a Catholic?"

"Ask me anything you will, and I will answer you gladly," he replied.

"Thank you," she said. "Have you heard of the accident on the lake yesterday?"

"Yes, I heard all about it, all the particulars, I believe," he answered, a little surprised, however, at the question.

"No," she said, "you have not, you cannot hear *all* except from myself; will you hear it now, and then tell me the truth about it?"

He did not speak, but looked kindly at her, and made her a sign to go on.

"You have heard, I suppose," she said, "that



the cause of the accident was my literal obedience to Sir William Grant's orders. That is true, so far ; but, Father Clarke, hear this now." She turned and fixed her eyes steadily on his face, as if to vouch for the truth of her words ; but she might have spared herself that, for he never looked towards her. "*I knew* the full extent of the danger, I fully expected what happened, I *knew* it was at the risk of all our lives ; and yet I obeyed, because I was too proud to dispute, because I enjoyed the triumph of proving his own folly to him. I deliberately and purposely risked the lives of all those persons. Tell me, is not this, in God's sight, and according to the judgment of the Church, *murder* ?"

To her astonishment, he betrayed not the slightest sign of being either shocked or startled ; he only said, very gently and kindly :

"Will you answer me one question ? Did you deliberately *desire* and *intend* to cause the death of all those persons, or of any one of them ?"

"O no ! no, indeed," she cried, shocked beyond measure at this very clear definition.

"God be praised ! you are not guilty then of murder, but—"

"Then it was only pride ?" she interrupted, scarcely able to restrain the expression of her relief.

"Only pride ?" he repeated ; "my poor child, do you not know that pride carried to this extent is just as much a mortal sin as murder ?"

Edith covered her face with her hands and was silent for a few moments ; then she said slowly :

"What does a mortal sin mean?"

"Something that kills the grace of God in the soul, and makes salvation impossible till it is confessed and absolved."

"For a Catholic, you mean; but for those who are not Catholics—who cannot get absolution?"

"There is no salvation out of the Church, except for such as are in invincible ignorance; to remain wilfully out of the Church is in itself a mortal sin."

To her own excessive astonishment—for she had never done such a thing in her life before in the presence of others—Edith burst into tears.

Poor Father Clarke accused himself of having been too severe and harsh, and said all he could think of to comfort her, telling her of the unspeakable peace she would find in the Church, even in the mere act of submission to it.

"I cannot, I cannot!" was all Edith would reply.

"Why cannot you, my child?" he said at last. The same question Mr. Bruce had asked; but she did not refuse to answer it now.

"I dare not; it would be from human motives, human affections, not purely for the sake of God's truth."

"Do you really think it is God's truth?" he asked.

"I do not *think*, I *know* it is."

"And yet you scruple to obey it? Surely that is some strange distortion of mind."

"But I should never have found it out for myself; I only know it through the influence,

the teaching of another. I have come to it crookedly, and so—”

“My good child, don’t torment yourself in this way ; if God has shown you His truth, what does it matter through what instrument He may have chosen to do so ? You have nothing to do with that. He uses our feelings and affections often to work His own merciful will with us ; you have nothing to fear from that ; put aside the instrument and obey the teaching.”

Edith rose.

“Thank you,” she said ; “I must *think* quietly alone of what you say ; I cannot bear more now. But don’t think me ungrateful ; you have given me very great help.”

“Thank God !” he replied ; and again giving her his blessing, he left her.



## CHAPTER XXVII.

The currents of our lives

Now for the third time cross, and for the last.

*Sir Lancelot.*

WE must once more pass over nearly a year in the lives of those who, we hope, may have excited sufficient interest in our readers for them to feel some curiosity as to the change it may have wrought upon them.

It was the afternoon of a very hot day in July,

when a fly containing two gentlemen, with their luggage (evidently an arrival from the last train), drew up at the door of the little inn at Fernley. The elder of the two, to judge from his appearance, might have been about forty, and his voice and accent were unmistakably English, though his appearance and manners might have led one to suppose him an Italian, like his companion, a young man apparently about twenty. The Englishman's Roman collar marked his profession, otherwise there was nothing distinctive about him. He wore no tonsure. They ordered rooms for two nights, greatly to the surprise as well as satisfaction of the landlord, who was little accustomed to receive guests of such quality. After dinner the priest said :

"Fernando, shall you mind being left alone for a little? I should rather like a walk."

"Pray don't apologize," replied he ; "I am an Italian, you know, and can indulge in the *dolce far niente* for as long as you please, especially just after dinner. What on earth are you English made of, that you can never sit still and go to sleep like reasonable beings?"

The priest laughed, but merely saying, "Pleasant dreams to you!" went out.

He walked towards Clare Hall, and on arriving at the lodge, asked leave to be admitted for a stroll in the park. The woman hesitated. Edith was as unwilling to let strangers into the park as the Duke of Atholl to throw open Glen Tilt ; but somehow this did not look like a person to be refused : observing her difficulty, however, he said :

"I will keep out of sight of the house. I only want to walk down the path by the river, and out into the fields beyond."

The woman looked rather suspiciously at him.

"You seem to know the place pretty well, sir," she said, still keeping the gate closed.

He coloured slightly, but replied readily :

"My good woman, the river, and the path and the fields beyond it are all distinctly visible from where we are standing. I am neither blind nor short-sighted."

At this moment horse's feet were heard, and Edith herself appeared, mounted on a black Arab, of singular grace and beauty; her old friend Carlo was at her side. He sprang towards the priest with apparently rather hostile intentions; but as the latter stooped and patted him, he suddenly changed his manner, and fawned upon him as if recognizing an old friend.

"There is Miss Sydney herself," said the woman; "no doubt she will give you leave to go in, if you wish it."

He looked up, and their eyes met; both started, for they instantly recognized each other: *he* remembered the young English girl at Naples, and Edith remembered Padre Giuseppe. She was the first to recover herself. Holding out her hand frankly, as if to an old acquaintance, she said :

"I think we have met before. I am so glad to see you in England. Are you staying here, or only passing through?"

She spoke in Italian, but he smiled, and answered in English :

"I am staying here over to-morrow, and my chief object was to see you : if you will allow me, I will call upon you to-morrow."

"To see *me* !" exclaimed Edith in unfeigned astonishment ; "surely you are mistaking me for some one else."

"I think not," he replied in that quiet tone which always implies "I am *sure* not," "but I certainly did not know that the lady I met in Italy was Miss Sydney of Clare Hall."

There could be no mistake now ; but Edith, who had a strong objection to anonymous communications of all kinds, begged to be informed with whom she had the pleasure of speaking.

The priest looked either embarrassed or annoyed, she could not tell which, and, after a moment's hesitation, replied :

"I am Father Joseph, of the Society of Jesus."

Rather an unaffording reply certainly, and Edith looked keenly at him, but of course she felt it impossible with common civility to press the matter further ; she tried another subject.

"You have learnt English since I saw you last ; you could only speak to me in Italian then," she said.

He looked up at her with a meaning smile as he said :

"I *am* English, and the *last* time I saw you in Italy I spoke English."

"When ? where !" said Edith, with a start.

"In the Vatican ; do you remember Raffaele's Transfiguration ?"

Did she *not* remember it? He little knew the agitation those few words caused her.

"Indeed I do," she said. "Then it was *you* who spoke; I never knew——" then suddenly stopping, she bent down and said in a lower voice, "You were the first to speak to me of the true faith. Thank God, I *have* learnt it now. I am a Catholic."

"I know it," he replied; "it was that chiefly which gave me courage to call upon you."

"You knew it!" she exclaimed, with a bewildered look and something of her old feeling of the supernatural intelligence of the Jesuits.

He smiled kindly but gravely, and an expression of pain passed over his face as he said:

"Yes, I knew it from your uncle, Mr. Lyle. I will explain everything to you to-morrow, if you will allow me, and if you will kindly say at what hour you will be most disengaged. I will not detain you longer now; I see your horse is impatient."

In truth the foam dropped from the mouth of the eager animal, as he chafed and fretted against the bit, which, nevertheless, he was too well trained to disobey.

Edith remained a few moments in thought, during which time the priest examined her horse with an eye which somehow suddenly reminded her of Leonardo's description of the picture of the "brown" horse in his room; and which made the groom, who also noticed it, remark afterwards to the coachman:

"That there gen'leman know'd a thing or two about 'osses, or my name ain't Jim Davis."

"I shall be quite at leisure between eleven and two to-morrow," Edith said presently, "and shall have great pleasure in seeing you: meanwhile, if you were wishing to walk in the park, pray do so as long as you like."

He thanked her courteously, and passed on towards the river. Edith walked her horse slowly through the village, very contrary to her usual habit, which was to ride at a pace which sent all the children flying and screaming before her; she had learnt many things since she became a Catholic, but she had not yet subdued the painful restlessness which had taken possession of her from the day of her last interview with Mr. Hamilton. She had never seen him since then; never, either directly or indirectly, had the slightest communication with him, and yet she knew perfectly well where he was, and what he was doing—she had never lost sight of him. Shall it be asked *how* this was? "Where there is a will there is a way," nay, rather ten thousand ways, of learning what one has any real anxiety to know.

And so it came to pass that Edith knew very well (no matter how) that Edwyn Hamilton had lately entered upon his novitiate in a Capuchin monastery in Italy. It was not of him, however, that she was thinking at this moment, but of the person from whom she had just parted. What could a Jesuit priest, a perfect stranger, and not even residing in England, possibly want with her? How came he to know anything about



her? What business could he have had with Mr. Lyle?

Ah, there was a clue: no doubt it was some friend of Agnes's. Edith remembered her great devotion to Jesuits; but then, why not have told her so at once, instead of making such a mystery about it? Something, too, in his allusions to their former meeting seemed to imply a more personal interest in her; altogether it was very strange.

"Well, it's no use; thinking about it till Doomsday won't bring me any nearer," she concluded at last; and thereupon touching Selim lightly with her whip, she dashed off at full speed across the open country, leaving her attendant far behind, and causing him to mutter:

"Confound that black devil! it would break the wind of the best horse in the kingdom to keep pace with him."

Father Joseph continued his walk, with the bright little Laura dancing and foaming at his side, till he came to a gentle slope in the hitherto steep bank, on which he seated himself, and taking a small Breviary from his pocket, proceeded to say the Office of the day. It required, however, all the self-control he had acquired since his entrance into religion to enable him to resist the perpetual and extraordinary distractions which assailed him; his Office had never given him so much trouble since the first few months of his novitiate. He went on, however, steadily to the end, but it was with a feeling of great relief in having arrived thereat that he finally closed his book, and replaced it in his pocket.

For a long time he sat motionless, and in deep thought; then pressed his hands tightly over his eyes, as if to shut out some object that gave him pain.

"I was a fool to come here," he said to himself,—“worse than a fool, to come near this place—near *her*. Good heavens! how beautiful she is? and a Catholic too! If I had only known *that* when—ha!” he exclaimed suddenly, as an involuntary movement caused a sharp pain from the points of an iron girdle which he wore.

The effect was instantaneous: starting from his seat, he threw himself on his knees, made a fervent act of contrition, and a resolution to take a more severe discipline than ordinary that night, then rose and walked quietly back to the village.

"Yes," he said to himself, "I must see her to-morrow, that is a *duty*, and therefore——" he said a short prayer and crossed himself; "but then, not another hour here. I had no idea old ties, old affections, were so strong; I thought my vows had cut them all off—a priest, a religious—what have I been doing? Well, well, I have so often taken scandal at others—it is a good punishment."

On arriving at the inn, he found his companion just rousing out of his sleep.

"Well," he said, accosting him, "your reverence has had walking enough, I hope! Why, in the name of all that's wonderful, couldn't you be quiet, instead of wandering about like a disturbed spirit, or one of those *kelpies* your friend Sir Walter Scott talks about?"

Father Joseph smiled.

"Perhaps," he said, "because I felt like one of them, come back to re-visit its native earth : you know a great part of my boyhood was spent in this place."

"Per Bacco!" replied the other, "I knew nothing of the kind. So you've been looking up old haunts, eh? and old friends, perhaps, too?"

"No; I have no old friends here, except the Protestant clergyman, and he, I suppose, would hardly recognize me; but, Fernando," he added rather gravely, "I wish you would leave off swearing."

The young Italian laughed gaily.

"You don't mean to say you call that swearing!" he exclaimed; "I'll be bound you've been guilty of many a worse oath yourself in those same old days you speak of, when you followed Sir Charles Sydney's hounds on that pretty brown mare you have such a famous portrait of."

An expression of keen suffering passed over Father Joseph's countenance; but he replied calmly:

"True enough, Fernando; God grant you may never have such sins as mine to answer for!"

Fernando was sobered instantly, and deeply affected; his quick southern nature was as susceptible as a woman's.

"What a brute I am to plague you!" he said. "Come now, I promise you to leave off swearing when—let me see—when Birnam

Wood shall come to Dunsinane'—is that correct? You see I have been studying your national literature."

"Quite correct," replied Father Joseph, kindly; "but remember, Fernando, Birnam Wood *did* come to Dunsinane."

"Yes, yes, I know all about that," Fernando answered, a little impatiently; "but now I am going to order some coffee, and you must drink it before you say your Office. You must be as tired as a dog—ah, *questi Inglesi!*"

"Thank you, I shall be very glad of it; but I have said my Office."

"That's famous! then we can have a comfortable chat before you go to bed; I suppose you want to be up at some unearthly hour in the morning?"

"I shall rise at six, but we can breakfast when you like; I have no engagement till eleven."

"Very good; you stay here till Thursday?"

"No, I shall go on to Birmingham to-morrow evening, and you will not be condemned to another night in an uncarpeted bedroom," replied Father Joseph, laughing.

He did not keep Edith long waiting the next morning; she had hardly established herself in her boudoir after breakfast when he was announced. Without speaking she knelt for his blessing, and then waited for him to begin the conversation; but as he did not seem inclined to do so she said presently:

"You have some communication to make to me, if I understood you rightly yesterday."

"I have," he replied; "but first you must

know who I am. I gave you only my name in religion yesterday—in the world it is Harry Vincent.”

Edith gave an involuntary start, and the colour rushed to her cheeks; but she raised her eyes with an expression of perfect confidence to his face, as she replied warmly :

“Then we are cousins. I am glad I know now why I have never forgotten you.”

But it was to the first impression he saw his words had made upon her that he replied :

“I see I am not a stranger to you under that name; you have perhaps heard—”

“I have heard of you only as the next possessor of Clare Hall,” she interrupted hastily, “and I cannot tell you the happiness it is to me to think it will pass into Catholic hands; it relieves me of a very great embarrassment.”

Father Joseph looked puzzled, it was a strange speech from a young and beautiful heiress.

“Mine was anyhow a very remote chance,” he said; “but my chief object in seeing you now was to tell you, because I think it right to do so, as a mere matter of form, that I have made a legal resignation of all claims upon the estate in favour of the next of kin, who I find is Miss Brooke. As a religious, you know, I could not inherit property, so I have only made a virtue of necessity. I was anxious to tell you also for another reason; I thought you might have heard that I had offered securities on this estate for the payment of gambling debts. I know it has been reported so: it is not true.”

He spoke in a clear firm tone, which betrayed

nothing (unless in its stiffness) of the pain this declaration cost him.

Edith was deeply touched, for she fully appreciated the voluntary mortification.

"I never heard so," she replied; "and if I had—you need not have denied it."

"Thank you," he replied simply, but in a tone which spoke far more than the mere word.

"It will go to Miss Brooke, then," said Edith meditatively. "Well, I think perhaps she will be a Catholic in time, and at all events she will do anything *I* wish."

Father Joseph raised his eyes for a moment, and for the first time, to her face.

"You seem to forget that it is your own," he said.

She smiled gravely and sadly as she answered:

"For a few years, yes. I must do the most I can with it while I have it. If I could have given it up at once to you, it would have been a great comfort. I should be free then; but I suppose I must wait now. I must build a church and establish a mission here while I can; the mission, I hope, will be opened in a few weeks, for there is a private chapel in this house which I am having restored, and as soon as it is ready for use, I hope to have a priest here. The church must wait another year till I am of age, and can command the full use of my property; and I suppose I am bound to do all I can with it before I let it pass into other hands."

Father Joseph was no longer puzzled, but he saw that she was mistaken on one point.

"You seem hardly aware," he said, "that only the *landed* property is entailed; the rest, that is, rather more than half, is *absolutely* at your own disposal. I know this from your guardian, Mr. Lyle, with whom I have just been transacting the business I spoke of to you."

"Mr. Lyle told you *that*!" exclaimed Edith. "Then he has deceived me shamefully; he told me—well, no matter now. I am very thankful I have learnt the truth. Did he mention my cousin Agnes?"

"He mentioned having a daughter a Catholic, nothing more."

"I owe everything to her: but I shall never see her again—she is a Poor Clare at Amiens."

"You have no thoughts then of joining her?"

"Of being a Poor Clare?—no, it would never do for me, it is too high. I mean," she added, shrinking from what might seem like a *profession* of humility, "I must have active life; too much time for thinking would ruin me."

Once more Father Joseph looked up; what could he have seen that made him say:

"God grant you peace, my child! I had nearly forgotten something," he continued. "I have a message to you from a Capuchin novice, whom I met accidentally on my journey through Italy. He had been Mr. Bruce's curate here."

He paused, but Edith did not speak; she took up a fan, and used it in such a way as to shade her face from her companion, but it was a very sultry day, and the action seemed perfectly natural. Father Joseph continued:

"He begged me to tell you that he had found

all he hoped for, and far more than he had believed possible, in the Church; that he had no idea such peace and joy as he experienced could be found in this world, and that he should never cease to pray daily for your conversion."

"He does not know of it, then!" and a pang of keen suffering shot through her heart at this proof of more perfect detachment than she had been able to practise—had he already become so indifferent to her? This was hard to bear; but she little knew the real truth—it was better not.

"No, he told me that Mr. Bruce never wrote to him now, he seems to have taken a much more severe line towards Catholics lately; but I hope to see Brother Bernard again shortly, on my way back to Naples, and I will tell him. Can I say anything else for you?"

"Will you be kind enough to tell him," said Edith, with difficulty controlling herself so as to speak in her ordinary tone, "that as soon as I have built the church, and provided as far as possible for all the necessities of the mission here, I hope to be allowed to join the Sisters of Charity; and will you say that I hope he will never leave off praying for me?"

"I will: and now I must not stay longer with you," he said. "God bless you! pray for me."

She had scarcely time to kneel while he made the sign of the cross, before he had left the room.

"I must go to Birmingham this afternoon; I will return to-morrow morning," Edith said at luncheon-time to Miss Brooke.

"Very well, my love," replied that lady



meekly. She never thought of remonstrating with her now ; she had a superstitious idea that it was safest not to meddle with "Papists."

Of those who were constantly passing in and out of the church at Birmingham, perhaps none noticed Edith Sydney, as she knelt silent and motionless for three long hours before the Blessed Sacrament. The next morning she went to Confession and Communion. From that day forward, though she never forgot Brother Bernard in her prayers, the name of Edwyn Hamilton never passed her lips.



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

A sunset in the sky,  
Sinks deepest in the heart when it is fading from the eye.  
F. W. FAHER.

WHEN Edith told Padre Giuseppe that she should never see her cousin Agnes again, she certainly thought she was speaking the truth ; her horror of a *grille*, and especially a double grille, like those of the Poor Clares, was so insurmountable, in spite of her real admiration of the life which it fenced out from worldly eyes, that when she had seen her in London on the morning of her departure for Amiens, she had said,

"It is good-bye for ever in this world, Agnes ; don't ask me to come and see you in the convent. I could not bear it."

But Agnes had not taken her at her word, for early in the October following Padre Giuseppe's visit to England, she wrote to her cousin, expressing an earnest wish that she would be present at her profession, which was to take place on the Feast of St. Peter of Alcantara.

"You say," Agnes wrote, "that you will be going to Paris about that time, to see the Sisters of St. Vincent of Paul; could you not take Amiens in your way? I cannot of course see you before the 19th, as I shall be in retreat, but it would be a great pleasure to me if we could be together on that day."

Edith read this letter three times over, spent about half an hour in making her decision, and then wrote briefly, "I will be with you on the 19th. I shall arrive in Amiens the day before."

She had been longing for some time to see Agnes again, and it only needed this direct invitation to decide her on at length braving the formidable *grille*. Deep down in her heart too there lay another motive for desiring to witness so heroic an act of self-sacrifice. Example is proverbially stronger than precept, and Edith wanted something stronger just then. She was about to do a thing which she knew well to be scarcely prudent (but she hated prudence almost as much as ever), and certainly neither heroic nor self-denying; a thing which she dared not speak of to her director lest it should be forbidden her, and which yet she had determined to do, with the old recklessness of her nature, which would still every now and then escape from her control, and break through all the restraints of

obedience. According to nature, she hated obedience still more than prudence, and though, according to grace, she tried hard to learn and practise it, it was a hard lesson to her; and from time to time the pent-up stream burst its flood-gates and carried every thing before it in a wild storm of utter self-abandonment. A reaction, sudden and violent, was sure to follow—a time of bitter remorse and sharp penance—but just now the reckless mood was on her, and bore her swiftly along, as on the wings of the wind.

She had heard that Brother Bernard was staying in Paris on his way to England, and an extreme desire took possession of her to see him once more; a passionate craving if only to hear the sound of his voice. From the time of their last parting she had longed, with that longing which, like hope deferred, maketh the heart sick, to have his blessing as a Catholic priest; it might be torture for a moment, but she thought it would be like the "Peace, be still!" spoken over the stormy waves of the Galilæan lake, and be followed by a great calm. And now at last she had an opportunity of satisfying her longing. She was going to Paris to see the Noviciate of the Sisters of St. Vincent of Paul, and to make certain arrangements with the superiors preparatory to entering it, as she intended to do the following year, as soon as she should be of age. There was no need certainly for doing this just now, for she had still nearly a year to wait, but her old impetuosity of nature urged her forward. She was one who never willingly delayed till to-morrow what could be done to-day, and she was

eager to see and become acquainted with the future life and home to which she felt herself called by a Divine vocation. And besides, Brother Bernard was in Paris, a few weeks later he would be sent to England, probably to some far off country mission, where she would have no chance of ever seeing him ; in Paris she could do so easily, and unobserved ; no fear of prying eyes or busy tongues in the "crowded solitude" of a great city where they were both strangers, and during her stay there she had surely as good a right to attend the church of the Capuchins as any other. Let her not be misjudged. She was impetuous, reckless, imprudent, and those to whom passionate impulses and strong affections are as an idle tale or an unknown language may think harshly of her, but she was neither weak nor wavering. With her whole heart she had learnt to thank God that He had called and consecrated to Himself one so singularly fitted to glorify Him by the sacrifice of everything most dear to nature. With her whole heart she had made the sacrifice her own, by offering it voluntarily, and by uniting herself to it by a similar sacrifice on her own part. She had not even the shadow of a temptation to regret what had been done, or of a morbid hankering after what had been, once for all, renounced ; her natural generosity of character, increased and sanctified by grace, made any such weakness an impossibility to her. But though nature was completely and entirely subdued, it was not wholly dead within her, and sometimes asserted itself in a manner hard to be altogether repulsed, and this was the

case now; but though she was determined to yield to a certain point, she had fixed that point, and was firmly resolved not to go beyond it. Her last words to Edwyn Hamilton had been, "When you are a priest, not before, you will perhaps one day give me your blessing, and tell me if you are happy." And he had promised to do so. There was no longer any need to ask him if he were happy. She *knew* he was happy, far more than happy; she knew that the grace of his vocation, faithfully corresponded with, had filled his whole heart and soul with joy unspeakable—she knew it, and she *could bear* to know it; it was even her greatest earthly consolation to know it, for she too was now just learning the blessed truth that *they who leave all for God find all in God*. But she wanted his blessing, and he had promised it to her, she had a right to claim the fulfilment of that promise; it would no doubt be more perfect to renounce this desire, but she could not; that grace was too high for her as yet. "I am not St. Teresa," she said to herself; "I have made no vow to do always that which is most perfect. I *must* have this one thing. I *will* have it. *Is it not a little one?* Just once—only once—I will hear him say mass, and follow him to the sacristy and ask for the blessing he promised me. That cannot be a sin, and it can do *him* no harm; he is already far, far beyond all earthly feeling. Only this—only thus far, and no farther—and then—then the last chord will be snapped, and I shall be able to ask for the religious habit with a clear conscience and a free heart." She did not however venture to speak of her intention

to her confessor ; " I will tell him when I come back," she thought, " and then he may scold me as much as he likes—it will not matter then." She felt as if her old life was going to receive its death stroke, and be no longer a part of herself.

Miss Brooke accompanied her to France, though she protested vigorously against going to see anything so " shockingly unnatural" as the profession of a Poor Clare. Sisters of Charity she could understand and admire, though she thought it a grievous mistake for anyone in Edith's social position to join them. " It was an excellent institution," she said, " for women of benevolent dispositions and small means, but people ought to do their duty in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call them, and ladies had no business to turn themselves into hospital nurses."

Edith never attempted to argue the point; she merely said,

" It is my vocation, and I must follow it;" and Miss Brooke, who thought that *vocation* meant to a Catholic what *kismet* does to a Turk sincerely pitied her as the victim of an unhappy delusion.

But the life of a Poor Clare she neither understood nor admired, nor even respected; it was both useless and wicked, she said; it was of no good to anybody, and only a plausible way of committing suicide.

" No good to anybody!" Edith exclaimed, one day, indignantly; " why every Poor Clare is worth a hundred missionaries!"

" What do you mean, my love?" asked Miss

Brooke, to whom such an assertion sounded like some utterly unintelligible problem in mental arithmetic. "Missionaries really do work hard to convert people, but Poor Clares do nothing except——"

"Except *practise the Crucifixion*," interrupted Edith, "which you call committing suicide, but did not our Lord's sufferings draw more souls to Him than his preaching?"

But after saying these words she left the room hastily without waiting for an answer. She had spontaneously used as her own an expression that she had learnt from Edwyn Hamilton; it was not the first, nor the twentieth, nor even the hundredth time that this had occurred to her, it had become a second nature with her to think his thoughts, but it always startled and frightened her to be reminded of this, to feel that she lived and moved and had her being in one of God's creatures rather than in Himself. She knew that she would never be able to shake off this second nature that had grown upon her; it must only be subdued with her own, or rather as part of her own, which it had become, but it was hard work, and a sharp struggle.

The ceremony of Agnes's profession (she was now Sister Mary Clare) was very trying to Edith; she looked upon such a vocation as a far higher one than her own, and though she tried to draw nourishment for humility from the thought that she was not worthy of it, she could not see another mounting higher up on the ladder of spiritual perfection than herself

without a sort of holy envy; a year ago there would have been much of bitterness and mortified pride mixed up with this feeling, but she had struggled hard to crush out this.

"O Agnes!" she exclaimed, the moment she saw her at the grille after the ceremony; "how happy you must be! And that sermon was just fit for you; you will be singing now all your life—*Et exaltavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo*. I never knew those words meant so much before; you have indeed a right to them now."

"Not any more right than you will soon have yourself, dear," was the reply; "nor indeed than you have already, for our Lord has already chosen you for his spouse, and you are only waiting His time, not delaying for your own."

"But my life will be so different from yours, Agnes: you are out of the world, I shall be always in it."

"Yes, but only as our Lord was in it, for the sake of saving souls; your life will be the nearest to His own of any that can be lived on this earth. I think those words belong more to you than to us, for a religious life without enclosure requires a higher degree of sanctity to keep it uncontaminated by the spirit of the world."

"Do you mean to say you think the life of a Sister of Charity higher than that of a Poor Clare?" exclaimed Edith in great astonishment.

Agnes laughed, a clear silvery laugh, such as she had never had light-heartedness enough for in the world, as she replied,



"Well, there is an old saying that comparisons are odious, and they are rather worse than odious in this case. I suppose God gives everyone the grace that will most conduce to the perfection of that particular soul; certainly no one who is called by Him to the active life would find perfection in the contemplative, or *vice versâ*."

"But for yourself?"

Agnes opened the shutter of the grille a little way and looked at Edith for a moment. She still wore the crown of thorns that had been placed on her head when she voluntarily chose it at her profession, and the black veil gave an almost death-like whiteness to her face, but there was something so perfectly heavenly in her smile, that Edith exclaimed involuntarily,

"O, Agnes; you are a saint already!" The shutter was instantly closed, and, as if she had not noticed the last remark, Agnes said quietly,

"For myself, I can only thank God more and more every day for having given me the great grace of our holy vocation; pray for me, that I may be faithful to it, and now I must go to the choir; good-bye dear Edith."

"O, Agnes, one moment more, I want to tell you something, to ask you—"

"Sister Mary Clare is not here," said a voice strange to Edith; "if it is anything of importance I will call her back."

There was a moment's hesitation before Edith replied,

"No, thank you, do not disturb her again; per-

haps you will kindly tell her that I want her prayers for a particular intention."

It was an act of interior mortification, and it had its reward.

That evening they went on to Paris, and the next morning Edith went to pay her intended visit at the Convent of St. Vincent of Paul. With all her recklessness she had self-control enough to make that her *first* object. Late in the afternoon of that day, however, she hired a carriage, and telling Miss Brooke that she was going to visit a church in a distant part of the town, drove to the Capuchin monastery in the Faubourg St. Jacques. As she expected, confessions were being heard in the church, but only two Fathers were there, both venerable-looking, middle-aged men. Edith knelt near one of the confessionals, and waited for her turn to go in. Before leaving the confessional she said quietly,

"Could you tell me at what hour Father Bernard will say Mass here to-morrow?"

"Father Bernard! you must surely mean some one else; did you know Father Bernard, my child?"

It was well that she was kneeling there, with the grace of the Sacrament of Penance fresh upon her soul, for with an instinctive presentiment of what was coming upon her, she replied,

"I knew him in England, is he gone from here?"

"Gone to heaven, I believe; he was too good for this world, and we have reason to think that he

is not even detained in Purgatory; he was a holy soul, and would have been a bright ornament to our Order; we hoped he would have done a great work in England, but God's ways are not our ways, and he is gone to intercede, instead of to labour, for his country."

Edith heard as if in a dream, she felt stunned, stupefied, but she had heard every word distinctly, and knew what it all meant; only she could not realize it just yet, she dared not even attempt to realize it then and there. She neither moved nor spoke, and the priest turned to hear the penitent at the other side of the confessional. When he turned back she was still there, but she had recovered a certain amount of self-possession.

"I will not detain you," she said in a stiff, unnatural voice. "I only want to know when and how Father Bernard died."

Instead of being cross with her, as she expected, for taking up his time, the good old Father answered very kindly,

"About a fortnight ago he carried a child ill with fever in his arms to one of the hospitals, a week later he was taken ill himself, and died in four-and-twenty hours. It was a very malignant kind of fever. He was able to receive the last Sacraments, and was quite clear-headed at the end. He died with the names of Jesus and Mary on his lips, a true follower of the great Saint whose name he bore. You must pray for his soul, though my own firm belief is that he needs no prayers; but it would be a false charity to act upon it."

"Thank you, Father, how long will the church

remain open?" said Edith, with an abruptness which rather astonished him; he told her it would not be shut for about two hours, and without saying another word she left the confessional and crouched down behind a pillow in a dark corner, where, however, she could just see the Tabernacle, and the Sanctuary Lamp.

And now she began slowly to understand what had been told her. It is only when we recover from the stunning effect of a blow that we begin to feel its pain, and it is doubtless mercifully so ordered, lest the full weight of a great sorrow coming suddenly should crush us. The first shock simply paralyzes us, but sooner or later the deadened sensibilities waken gradually into life, and this restoration of the suspended powers of the soul, like the restoration of suspended animation to the body, is the most intense agony. In some cases the process begins quickly and proceeds rapidly, in others it is long delayed, and lingers slowly on, sapping the heart's life-blood in its course, but perhaps in no case does the full awakening come for many a long month or year.

With Edith's quick vivid nature it began however almost immediately. The "beginning of the end" was not long delayed. The state of mental paralysis lasted for about half an hour, and then gave way to a burst of tears, not sudden or violent, but utterly defying all check or control. Persons passed and repassed her, the priest who had heard her confession and answered her questions, went by on his way to the sacristy, but she never moved, never even drew further

back into the darkness : it did not matter. Nothing mattered any more in this world now he was no longer in it ; it was a waste howling wilderness, inhabited only by certain beings who were nothing to her, nor she to them ; the light of earth had been suddenly turned to darkness, such darkness as "*might be felt*," and in which she felt no courage to wander forth alone ; a chill as of death seemed to freeze all the blood in her veins, and the only thought that could frame itself into a definite form in her heart was "I must go, too ; I cannot stay here ; there is nothing to live for. Take me to him."

But at this last point she raised her eyes for a moment, and they rested on the Tabernacle. Jesus knows His spouses, and knows how to draw their hearts to His own : He will not repulse them for a moment of human weakness, as man only too often does ; He looks down upon them from His altar-throne, and His look pierces into their inmost hearts, and kindles there a burning love for Himself which consumes and lays low all other loves. Yes, she was all His own now. He had brought her into the wilderness that He might speak to her heart, and open to her His own as a refuge ; that he might say to her, "My child, I am thy Spouse, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee ; is My love nothing to thee ? is it not worth living for ? I have broken thy bonds and set thee free, that thou mightst fly, without let or hindrance, to Me." *Dirupisti vincula mea*—her heart spoke the words, but her lips refused to frame them, and there would be a long and bitter struggle yet before she could add *Tibi*

*sacrificabo hostiam laudis.* He had broken her bonds, the bonds she could not break for herself, with one touch of His hand he had snapped them suddenly asunder; suddenly, but yet how gently, how compassionately, how exactly as she was best able to bear it! In His own very Presence, with His own precious Blood fresh upon her soul, almost with His own Hand, for the blow had been struck by one speaking as His representative. For all this she could even already thank Him, but not yet for the blow itself. A very real and deep change had passed upon her since she became a Catholic, had it not been so she would have been tempted to "curse God and die," and even now a wild thought of self-destruction would have set her brain on fire if she had not crushed it down with a strong hand. She had made many acts of self-sacrifice, many acts of interior mortification in the last few months, but this one thing she would not sacrifice, she had set her heart upon it, and she would have it, let it cost her what it might; she would have the blessing that had been asked and promised in those parting words which seemed even yet sounding in her ears. In moments of wild passion she had said to herself, "I have a right to it, and God Himself shall not take it from me." And now He had taken it from her, at last, after long waiting to see if she would be generous and make a voluntary offering of it to Him: He had asked her for this sacrifice many times, and again and again she had refused it, she had said "anything else, but not that." And now He had taken it, and she had lost for ever the crown she might

have won by offering it freely. This was the bitterest drop in her chalice of suffering; the thought that Jesus had given all for her, and that she had refused something to Him. *Had* refused it? did she not still refuse it? Refuse to make it her own act by a generous consent of her will? She roused herself from her crouching posture, and, kneeling with her head pressed firmly against the pillar, she strained her eyes towards the Tabernacle, as though thus gazing they would plead for her, *Aspice in me, et miserere mei*; but her parched lips refused to frame even a single syllable. There was no need, it is not in words that the soul holds communion with its God, and it may be He saw enough there to draw down a special grace of generosity, for "power is made perfect in infirmity."

When the Sacristan came to tell her that he was now obliged to shut the church, she rose quietly and went out, walking like one in a dream. The carriage she had hired was waiting for her, and half an hour's drive brought her back to her hotel. She went straight to her room, and sent word to Miss Brooke that she had a bad headache, and begged to be excused from coming down any more that evening.

"No wonder," thought Miss Brooke; "I am sure if it takes people four hours to confess their sins, they may well have a headache afterwards!"

The next day Edith went again to the mother-house of the Sisters of Charity: it seemed a relief to her to enter into every minute detail of

the arrangements connected with her reception amongst them.

"I wish," she said, "I might come to you now, without going back to England at all."

"Without the pain of another parting from your home, you mean," replied the Superioress. "But you must be brave, dear child; if God sends you into the battle, He will give you courage to fight it, and you know it is His will, not your own, that there should be this delay. You are going back to your home for a few months because He sends you, not because you have asked to be suffered first to go and bury your father."

Edith started up, and seized the hands of the astonished sister. "O don't," she said, "don't speak to me so; you don't understand; it will be no pain to me now to leave Clare Hall; I only wish never to see it again."

The good Sister replied gently, "You have had trouble or sorrow, I will not ask you now which, but, dear child, do not deceive yourself: disgust with the world, or weariness of it, is not a religious vocation; you must not come to us for any such motive, or you will neither be happy nor succeed."

"I know, I know," said Edith, "but it is not so, not as you think—indeed," she continued, fixing her eyes earnestly and imploringly on Sœur G  n  vi  ve's countenance, "I do firmly believe that God calls me to this life, and my confessor thinks the same. O, for the love of God do not refuse me!"

"God forbid, my child," replied the Sister,



"that I should refuse any one whom He calls : I only wished to warn you. I was about to ask you what, perhaps, you will think now unnecessary ; you know that our Sisters are bound to hold themselves ready to go to any part of the world at the shortest notice. You may think yourself settled down for years in some quiet English town, and the next hour may see you on your way to India or China ; have you courage for this ?"

Edith was gazing far away into the blue sky, but at this question she turned slowly back and said, "I think I should need more courage to remain in England—no, dear Sister, I am not afraid of this, all lands are the same to me now. You know," she added calmly, "I am an orphan, and have no near relations, no earthly ties ; as for old associations, the further you can remove me from them the better."

That evening Edith wrote a short note to her cousin—only these few words,

"DEAR SISTER MARY CLARE,—Will you pray for the soul of Father Bernard (Edwyn Hamilton), who died in the Capuchin monastery at Paris a fortnight ago, within the octave of St. Francis ? I have made all arrangements with the Sisters of Charity, and hope to join them in July. Pray for me. Your affectionate cousin,

"EDITH SYDNEY."

Just because she shrank from Fernley with all its associations, Edith hastened her return to Clare Hall. It had never been her practice to

“put off the evil day,” and in this case she felt that it would be far wiser to anticipate it : delay would only increase her sensitiveness on the subject, and perhaps unfit her altogether for the task before her. She was resolved to see Mr. Bruce, and to tell him all she had heard of his nephew, in the hope that it might by God’s grace in some way help towards his conversion, for which intention she had lately offered most of her prayers and spiritual exercises, though as yet with little apparent hope of success ; but then she had no great means of judging, for Mr. Bruce kept as much as possible aloof from her, and if he had doubts or misgivings, it was not likely that he would let her know of them.

Miss Brooke was greatly disappointed at leaving Paris sooner than she had expected, and before she had seen half the sights ; but Edith said she had done all that she came for, and was anxious to return and superintend the decoration and furnishing of her chapel ; and accordingly within a fortnight of their leaving England they again set foot on its shores.

Edith’s first act the morning after her return to Clare Hall was to send a note to Mr. Bruce, saying that she particularly wished to see him, and should be much obliged if he could call upon her in the course of the day : she knew well that in spite of the barrier between them he would never refuse such an appeal from her. Nor did he. A very short time after receiving her note he was sitting with her in the boudoir where we have so often before seen her. The crape on his hat told her that he had already heard of his

nephew's death, she was at least spared that part of her task.

"You have heard," she said; "they wrote to you from Paris, I suppose?"

"Yes," he replied; "it seems poor Edwyn had time to think of me, and requested one of the Fathers to write." There was a pause, Edith had not reckoned on this. He had dictated a letter, then; was there any message, any word for her? She could not ask, she dared not even betray any anxiety. After a few moments she said,

"They told me he was quite clear-headed to the last."

"Yes, wonderfully, marvellously clear-headed; see, you can read it if you like;" and he laid a letter on the table before her. She laid her hand upon it, as if to secure its possession.

"Read it," he said; "I cannot leave it with you."

*Cruel!* almost burst from her compressed lips, but she restrained herself, and it was well, for it would have been an unjust reproach. The window of the boudoir opened upon a small verandah; it was a cold day, and there was a drizzling rain, but regardless of both, she opened the window, and passed out, taking the letter with her. Mr. Bruce did not interfere; no, he was not cruel. The letter was very short, the handwriting was foreign, but the words were English. It first gave a brief account of the nature of Father Bernard's illness, and then proceeded, "He entreats me to urge you, as the last request of a dying man, to pray earnestly for the

gift of faith, to besiege Heaven with prayers for it, never to rest till you have obtained it, and to tell you that whatever sacrifices it may demand of you will be as nothing compared with the peace and joy it will bring. He also begs me to say that he heard from Father Joseph, a Jesuit, of Miss Sydney's submission to the Church, and that he hopes you will tell her it was a great consolation to him."

Was that all? Had he no other word for her than this? But she remembered that the letter was dictated to a stranger, and to a religious; she remembered, too, that he was a religious himself; that even one word more might have been a sacrilege.

She stood for a few moments looking up at the clouds, as she had got a habit of doing lately, and then, saying softly to herself, "*Yes, they are more our own, now that they are God's only,*" she turned back into the room, put the letter into Mr. Bruce's hand, and said,

"Do you know that Father Joseph was Harry Vincent?"

"Harry Vincent!" exclaimed Mr. Bruce, with a start of the most unfeigned astonishment; "what do you mean? how do you know?"

"I mean what I say, and he told me so himself a few months ago when he came here to see me," replied Edith, quietly.

But Mr. Bruce could not at all recover from his astonishment.

"Harry Vincent a Jesuit priest!" he repeated, as if hardly able to believe it; "why he was—" but he checked himself suddenly.

Edith smiled. "Never mind what he was," she said; "as God has forgotten it, I suppose we may do so; you know a religious profession is a second baptism—*Ecce! nova facio omnia.*" Mr. Bruce looked at Edith; how different she was now from what she had been two short years ago; how different Father Joseph must be from Harry Vincent? and Father Bernard, too! The Capuchin monk wrote of him with as much reverence as though he had been inscribing the acts of a saint. There was a short silence, and then Mr. Bruce said,

"The grace of God is a very awful thing."

Edith looked up quickly. "Yes," she said, "if it is not corresponded with. But now I want to tell you something more about Father Joseph; I saw him first in Naples, and the drawing you once asked me for was his portrait, taken from memory; you said it reminded you of some one you had known; you can have it now if you like; I will send it to you. But in return I want you to promise me two things—when the mission here is opened, I hope to be able to get Father Joseph to take the charge of it; will you promise me to renew your acquaintance with him, to make a friend of him? and," she continued, without giving him time to answer, her, "will you promise me to do what that letter asks of you?"

It was a brave speech, but Edith had never lacked courage.

"You would compass sea and land to make one proselyte, I believe," he replied, but added very gravely, "however, I will make both the promises

you ask of me, and you may trust to my keeping them."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Edith fervently; she had little fear now for the result.

The following year, when she entered the noviciate of the Sisters of Charity, it was Mr. Bruce who escorted her to Paris, at Father Joseph's request, who said that he could not trust her in better hands than in those of his worthy sacristan.

THE END.



## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

---

*Fcap. 8vo. 5s.*

**Verses on various Occasions**, now collected for the first time. By JOHN H. NEWMAN.

---

*Beautifully bound in bevelled cloth, 3s. 6d.*

**Tales from the Diary of a Sister of Mercy.**  
By C. M. BRAME.

Contents: The Double Marriage—Cross and the Crown—The Novice—The Fatal Accident—The Priest's Death—The Gambler's Wife—The Apostate—The Besetting Sin.

---

*Elegant cloth, 3s. 6d.*

**In the Snow; or, Tales of Mount St. Bernard.**  
By the Rev. W. H. ANDERDON.

Contents: The Nabob's Tale—The Sea-Captain's Tale—The Student's Legend—The Irishman's Voyage—The Squire's Tale—The Danish Merchant's Tale—The Lady's Tale, &c. &c.

---

**The Life and Letters of Mad. Swetchine;**  
uniform with "Eugénie de Guérin." 7s. 6d.

One of the most interesting works of the day.

---

**Nellie Netterville; a Tale of the Times of Cromwell.** By CECILIA CADDELL, Author of "Wild Times." 5s.

---

*In One Volume, Fcap. 5s.*

DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

**Mary in the Gospels; or, Lectures on the History of the Blessed Virgin as recorded by the Evangelists.** By the Very Rev. Dr. NORTHCOTE, President of St. Mary's College, Oscott.



## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

---

**Library of Religious Biography.** Edited by  
EDWARD HEALY THOMPSON.

**Vol. I. THE LIFE OF ST. ALOYSIUS GONZAGA,**  
S.J. 5s.

*Nearly Ready.*

**Vol. II. THE LIFE OF MARIA EUSTELLE HARPAIN,** the Sempstress of St. Pallais, commonly called "The Angel of the Eucharist."

*To be followed by*

**THE LIFE OF ST. STANISLAS KOSTKA, S.J.**

---

**A Manual of Catholic Worship.** By the Very  
Rev. Canon OAKELEY. Cloth, 1s.

*By the same.*

**The Ceremonies of the Mass.** 1s.

**Lyra Liturgica.** 3s. 6d.

---

**The Popular Choir Manual.** Containing Music for the whole course of the year, arranged in such a way as to be sung by the least experienced Choir. Morning, 3s. 6d.; Evening, 5s. 6d.; or in One Volume, cloth, 10s. 6d., post-free.

*\*\*\* The Pieces in this Volume, if published in the usual size, would not cost less than £10 or £12.*

---

*In One Volume, cloth, 10s. 6d.*

**The Popular Hymn and Tune Book ;** being the Vocal Scores and Accompaniments for the "Hymns and Melodies" (1s.), adapted to the "Path to Heaven," and Hymns for the Year.

*The Music in this Work (the cheapest ever printed), which commences with the Simplest Melodies, will, it is believed, be found thoroughly appropriate, as well as easy and attractive in style.*

---

LONDON : BURNS, OATES, & CO., 17, PORTMAN ST.

**BOOKS published by BURNS, OATES, & COMPANY,  
17 Portman Street and 63 Paternoster Row.**

- Verses on various Occasions, now collected for the first time.*  
By JOHN H. NEWMAN. Fcap. 8vo. 5s.
- In the Snow: or Tales of Mount St. Bernard.* By the Rev.  
W. H. ANDERDON, M.A. 3s. 6d.
- Diary of a Sister of Mercy: a Series of Interesting Narratives.* By M. A. BRAME. 3s. 6d.
- Edith Sydney: a Tale.* By F. M. OXENHAM.
- Nellie Netterville: a Tale of the times of Cromwell.* By  
CECILIA CADDELL, author of "Wild Times," &c. 5s.
- New Month of Mary: or "The Second Eve."* By the BISHOP  
OF NAMUR. Cloth, 3s.
- The Life and Letters of Madame Swetchine* (uniform with  
"Eugénie de Guérin"). Cloth, 7s. 6d.
- Catechism of Christian Doctrine familiarly explained.* By  
the Rev. P. POWER. 2 vols. 7s. 6d.

**THE PATH TO HEAVEN;**

*The Cheapest and most Complete Book of Devotions for Public  
or Private use ever issued. (25th Thousand.)*

Upwards of One Thousand pages for Two Shillings.

It contains:

1. All the usual Devotions for Morning and Evening, Prayers at Mass, for Confession, Communion, the Sacraments, the Sick, &c.
2. Litanies, Novenas, Devotions, and Hymns, in regular order, for every month in the year (including Indulged Prayers), intended for use in Evening Services in Churches, as well as in private. This is an *entirely novel feature*, and will, it is presumed, make the Volume a *sine qua non* in every Mission.
3. Offices: besides Vespers, Compline, Office of Immaculate Conception, &c., it comprises the "Bona Mors," Novena of St. Francis Xavier, and Sacred-Heart Devotions, used by the Jesuit Fathers; the Holy-Family Devotions; the Devotions for the Precious Blood; also Meditations, and the EPISTLES AND GOSPELS for the Year.
4. The most copious and varied collection of *Hymns and Sacred Songs* hitherto published (293). Music, 1s.

**Price:**

Cloth lettered, Two Shillings.	Morocco, gilt. . . . .	7s. 0d.
Neatly bound, red edges . . 2s. 6d.	Morocco, gilt extra . . . . .	8 0
Roan, lettered . . . . .	Morocco, rim and clasp . . . . .	12 0
French morocco, gilt edges . . 4 0	Morocco, gilt, rim and clasp . . . . .	14 0
Calf, red edges . . . . .	Velvet, rim and clasp . . . . .	10 6
Best calf . . . . .	Best Turkey Morocco . . . . .	8 6
Morocco . . . . .	Best Turkey Morocco, gilt . . . . .	10 6

*The Complete Catalogues, English and Foreign, may be had on application.*

2. *The Garden of the Soul.* New Edition, with all the additional Devotions in general use. Neat roan, 6d.; large paper, superior, 8d.; ditto, embossed, with gilt edges, containing Ordinary of Mass, 1s.; Fr. morocco, gilt, 2s.; calf, 3s. 6d.; best morocco, 4s.; gilt, 5s. With Epistles and Gospels, roan embossed, 1s. 6d.; Fr. morocco, 2s.; gilt, 2s. 6d.; calf, 4s.; also best morocco, 4s. 6d.; gilt, 5s. 6d.; with neat clasps, 2s. extra.

*Garden of the Soul.* 18mo edit., good type, 1s.; with Epistles and Gospels, 1s. 4d. Ditto, very large type, for the sick and aged, 2s.

3. *The Golden Manual; a Complete Guide to Catholic Devotion, Public and Private* (thick or thin paper). Gilt, 5s. 6d.; Fr. morocco, 6s. 6d.; calf, 7s. 6d.; morocco, 8s. 6d.; gilt, 10s. With Epistles and Gospels, 1s. extra.

4. *The Church Manual; a Complete Pocket Prayer-Book, for general use.* Roan, 2s.; or neatly bound, gilt edges, 3s.; calf, 4s. 6d.; morocco, 5s.; gilt, 6s.

5. *Catholic Child's Guide to Devotion; a First Prayer-Book for the Young.* In large type, with engravings, 6d.; the same bound, 16 extra plates and hymns, 1s. 6d.; morocco, 2s. 6d.; gilt, 3s.

6. *The Prayer-Book for the Young*: being a sequel to the "Child's Prayer-Book" and "Dawn of Day." Roan, gilt edges, 1s.; morocco, 2s. 6d.; gilt, 3s.

7. *The Catholic's Vade-Mecum; or Select Prayers for Daily Use.* Cloth, 2s.; embossed roan, gilt edges, 2s. 6d.; Fr. morocco, 3s. 6d.; calf, red edges, 4s.; morocco, 4s. 6d.; gilt, 5s. 6d.; with Epistles and Gospels, 6d. extra.

Bound with Testament: calf, 6s. 6d.; morocco, 7s.; gilt, 8s.

8. *The Catholic's Companion for Mass, Vespers, &c.,* with various Devotions; being a Manual of Prayer, in *very large print*, suited to persons of weak sight. Roan, 3s.; calf, 4s. 6d.; morocco, 5s. 6d.; gilt, 6s. 6d.

9. *The Miniature Prayer-Book; or Little Pocket Manual*: a Selection of Prayers, in a neat size for the waistcoat pocket. With 14 engravings. Roan, 1s.; morocco, 2s.; gilt, 2s. 6d.; with clasp, 3s. and 3s. 6d.

10. *Catholic's Daily Companion.* Roan, 1s.; Fr. morocco, 2s.; calf, 3s.; morocco, 3s. 6d.; gilt, 4s. 6d.

11. *Flowers of Devotion.* Diamond type. Roan, 1s.; tuck, 1s. 6d.; Fr. morocco, 2s.; calf, 2s. 6d.; morocco, 3s.; gilt, 4s.

12. *Key of Heaven.* Cheap edition, 6d.; also roan, 1s. With Epistles and Gospels, 1s. 6d.; and in all bindings, as "Garden of the Soul" above.

13. *Catholic Piety.* By Gahan. New and beautiful edition. Prices as "Key to Heaven."



BURNS, OATES, & CO., 17 & 18 Portman Street, W.

14. *Daily Exercise*. New edition, with new and superior engravings. Cloth, 6d.; bound and gilt, 1s.

15. *Vita Divota*. By the Redemptorist Fathers. Cloth, 9d. *Manual of the Holy Family*, by the same, with Hymns, 6d.

16. *Prayers of St. Gertrude and Mechtilde*. Neat cloth, lettered, 1s. 6d.; Fr. morocco, red edges, 2s.; best calf, red edges, 4s.; best morocco, plain, 4s. 6d.; gilt, 5s. 6d. Also in various extra bindings. On thin vellum paper at the same prices.

*Exercises of St. Gertrude*. Prices as above.

17. *The Dawn of Day*. A Prayer-Book for Children. 1s.

18. *Devotion of the Bona Mors*. Cloth; 4d.

19. *Devotions to the Sacred Heart*. Frontispiece, 6d.

20. *Oratory Prayer-Book*. Cloth, 3s.

21. *Devotions for the "Quarant' Ore," or New Visits to the Blessed Sacrament*. Edited by CARDINAL WISEMAN. 1s., or in cloth, gilt edges, 2s.; morocco, 5s.

22. *Devotions for Country Missions*, with full Collection of Hymns. 6d.

23. *Family Prayers*.

---

### *Standard Devotional Books, uniformly printed in pocket size.*

1. *Imitation of the Sacred Heart*. By the Rev. Father ARNOLD, S.J. Translated by a Father of the same Company.

Approved by Father ROTHAM, General of the Society of Jesus, and four Theological Censors.

12mo, 4s. 6d.; or in handsome cloth, red edges, 5s.; also in calf, 8s.; morocco, 9s.; morocco, very neat, with edges turned over, 12s.

2. *The Spirit of St. Theresa*. 2s.; red edges, with picture, 2s. 6d.; calf, 5s.; morocco, 5s. 6d.

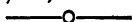
3. *Spirit of the Curé d'Ars*. 2s. Also in various bindings, as "St. Theresa."

4. *Manna of the New Covenant*; Devotions for Communion. Cloth, 2s.; bound, with red edges, 2s. 6d.

5. *Manual of the Sacred Heart*. New edition, 2s.; red edges, 2s. 6d.; calf, 5s.; morocco, 5s. 6d.

6. *A' Kempis*. The Following of Christ, in four books; a new translation, beautifully printed in royal 16mo, with borders round each page, and illustrative engravings after designs by the best German artists. Cl. 3s. 6d.; calf, 6s. 6d.; mor. 8s.; gilt, 10s. 6d.

The same, pocket edition. Cloth, 1s.; bound, roan, 1s. 6d.; Fr. morocco, 2s. 6d.; calf, 4s.; morocco, 4s. 6d.; gilt, 5s. 6d.



[Devotional Books continued.]

BURNS, OATES, & CO., 63 Paternoster Row, E.C.

7. *Spiritual Combat*; a new and careful translation. 18mo, cloth, 3s.; calf, 6s.; morocco, 7s.; gilt, 8s.

The same, pocket size. Cloth, 1s.; Fr. morocco, 2s. 6d.; calf, neat, 4s.; morocco, 4s. 6d.; gilt, 5s. 6d.

### *Missals, Vesper-Books, &c.*

*Missal.* New and Complete Pocket Missal, in Latin and English, with all the new Offices and the Proper of Ireland, Scotland, and the Jesuits. Roan, embossed gilt edges, 4s. 6d.; calf flexible, red edges, 7s. 6d.; morocco, gilt edges, 8s. 6d.; ditto, gilt, 10s.; with plates, 12s. Also an edition beautifully printed in red and black, morocco elegant, with engravings, 12. 1s. and upwards. A variety of other handsome bindings in morocco, russia, vellum, &c., with metal edgings, clasp, &c., from 12. 1s. up to 32.; ivory, very elegant, 22. 2s.

Bound with "Vesper Book," forming a complete Service Book for the laity: calf, 11s.; morocco, 12s.; morocco, gilt, 13s.

*Missal for the Laity.* Abridged edition, 32mo, cloth, 1s.; roan, 1s. 6d.; Fr. morocco, 3s.; gilt, 3s. 6d.; calf, 4s.; morocco, 4s. 6d.; gilt, 5s. 6d.

*Epistles and Gospels.* For Sundays, &c., 6d. Complete, 1s. 6d.

*Vesper Book for the Laity.* This Volume contains the Office of Vespers (including Compline and Benediction), complete for the first time for every day in the year. Roan, 3s. 6d.; calf, 5s. 6d.; morocco, 6s. 6d.; gilt, 7s. 6d. Also, thin paper, half an inch thick, same prices.

*Vesper Book:* the Parochial Vesper Book, containing the Office for all Sundays and Holidays, with Compline and Benediction. Cloth, 1s.; roan, neat, red edges, 1s. 6d.; roan, gilt edges, 2s.; Fr. morocco, 3s.; calf, 4s.; morocco, 4s. 6d.

*Vesper Book:* the Compendious Vesper Book, containing the Psalms, Hymns, and Responses for all Sundays and Feasts, with Compline, &c. 4d.; cloth, 8d.; with English "Hymns for the Year," cloth, 1s.

*Vesper Book for Chanting.* 1s.

*Devotions for the Seasons of the Year:* containing an Evening Service of Psalms, Hymns, and Prayers. No. I. Advent and Christmas to Septuagesima.

*New Testament.* New Pocket Edition, in beautiful type. Neat roan, 1s.; embossed, 1s. 6d.; Fr. morocco, 3s.; gilt, 3s. 6d.; calf, 4s.; best morocco, 4s. 6d.; gilt, 5s. 6d.

*Office of the B.V.M.,* Latin and English. 6d.; roan, 1s.; calf, 3s.; morocco, 3s. 6d.

*The Psalter in Latin,* 1s. 6d. *Do. in English.* New ed.

## LIST OF POPULAR BOOKS.

\* The Books marked "gilt" will be found especially adapted for Presents and Prizes. Those marked † will be found very useful as substitutes for the objectionable fictions of the cheap press.

### At 1s. each.

Abbots of St. Albans.  
Adventures in the Forest.  
Afternoons with the Saints.  
Amusements of Travel.  
Anecdotes, 300, Book of.  
Battle of Lepanto, & Siege of Vienna.  
Cardinal D'Amboise; or, the Story  
Catholic Legends. [of a Bell.  
Catholic Worship and Devotions.  
Cecily, St.: a Drama.  
Celebrated Men, Tales of  
Christian Heroism, Tales of.  
Clare Maitland.  
Conscience's Conscript.  
—— Ricketicketak.  
—— Poor Gentleman.  
—— Blind Rosa.  
Conversions, Narratives of.  
Cookery for Lent.  
Crusade of the Children, &c.  
Crusade of Hungary.  
Dodsworth on Popular Delusions.  
Elizabeth of Hungary, St.  
Emma's Cross, and other Tales.  
Enterprise and Peril, Tales of.  
Eustace, by Miss Stewart.  
Footsteps of Spirits.  
Floral Calendar of the Saints.  
France, Tales of.  
Francis, St., & Clare, St., Lives of.  
Francis of Sales, St., Spirit of.  
George Morton, and Boy and Man.  
Gerald, by Miss Stewart.  
Gérard the Lion-Killer (abridged).  
Gospel Stories.  
Harry O'Brien, and other Tales.  
Historical Tales and Legends.

Hungary, Crusade of. *See* Crusade.  
Joe Baker, and James Chapman.  
Joy and Sorrow, Tales of.  
Kings and Queens, Tales of.  
Land and Sea, Tales of.  
Lazaretto Keeper, The.  
Little Snowdrop. Cloth.  
Madeleine the Rosière.  
Manor of Mont Cruel.  
Mary and Elizabeth.  
Monks of Lerins.  
Narratives and Dialogues.  
Naval and Military Life, Tales of.  
Oakeley (Canon) on the Mass.  
Owen Evans.  
Paraguay, Missions in.  
Popular Poetry for the Young.  
Popular Ballads.  
Points of History.  
Preciosa. By Cervantes.  
Ratisbonne, Conversion of.  
Remarkable Men, Tales of.  
Rich and Poor, and Lucy Ward.  
Robert May, and Poor Man's Child.  
Sacred Poetry.  
Sainted Queens, Lives of.  
Schoolmaster's Adventures.  
Sœur Rosalie, &c., Lives of.  
Suffering for the Faith.  
Tales and Traditions.  
Treasures of Basra.  
Vessels of the Sanctuary.  
William of Waynflete, Life of.  
William of Wykeham, Life of.  
William Tell: a Drama.  
Winefride Jones.

### At 1s. 4d. each.

Ancient History: Greece, &c.  
Arctic Voyages and Discovery.  
Columbus and La Pérouse.  
Conscience's Miser.  
—— Count Hugo.  
Fabiola, a Drama by Canon Oakeley.  
† Historical Tales of old Time.  
Missions in the East.  
Missions in the West.  
Roman History.

Saints once of the Working Classes  
Scenes and Incidents at Sea.  
† Tales of Bandits, &c.  
† Tales of Catholic Artists.  
† Tales of Daring and Peril.  
† Tales of Faith and Loyalty—Brit-  
tany and La Vendée.  
† Tales of the French Revolution.  
Tales of Shipwrecks.  
† Tales of the Wars.

## At 1s. 6d. each.

Parables and Stories of Pere Bonaventure.  
 Tales of Celebrated Women.  
 †Andersen's Popular Tales.  
 Du Guesclin, the Hero of Chivalry.  
 †Bickerton; or, the Emigrants.  
 Holiday Tales. By Miss Taylor.  
 †Kate Kavanagh, or the Pretty Plate.  
 Lives of the Children of Mary.  
 Lives of Pious Youth.  
 Anecdotes and Incidents.

Afternoons with Mrs. Maitland.  
 Life of St. Ignatius.  
 Life of St. Philip Neri.  
 Life of St. Francis Xavier.  
 Life of St. Francis of Sales.  
 Life of Sir Thomas More. [sons.  
 Heath-House Stories, by Mrs. Par-  
 Household Tales and Traditions.  
 Plutarch's Lives.  
 Graces of Mary.

## At 1s. 8d. each.

Introduction to the Hist. of England.  
 †Breton Legends, *limp cloth*.  
 †Witch of Melton Hill, *limp cloth*.  
 †Dyrbington. By Mrs. Parsons, *ditto*.  
 †Father Connell, *ditto*.  
 †Tales of the Crusades, *ditto*.  
 †Hauff's Tales of Wonder, *ditto*.

Life of St. Frances of Rome, *ditto*.  
 Pictures and Parables, *gilt, elegant, illustrated*.  
 Pictures and Tales, *ditto*.  
 †Adventures of a Schoolboy, *limp cl.*  
 Heroines of Charity, *ditto*.

## At 2s. each.

Gérard the Lion-Killer, *fancy bds*.  
 Knights of St. John.  
 Popular Church History, *cheap ed.*  
 Poetry and Ballads for the Young.  
 Missions in Japan.  
 Gospel Story-Book, *plates, gilt*.  
 Life of St. Philip Neri, *gilt*.  
 Life of St. Francis Xavier, *gilt*.  
 Life of St. Ignatius, *gilt*.  
 Conscience's Veva, *fancy boards*.  
 ——— Demon of Gold, *ditto*.  
 ——— Tales of Flanders, *ditto*.  
 Anecdotes and Incidents, *gilt*.  
 Andersen's Tales, *gilt*.  
 Robinson Crusoe (revised).  
 Arabian Stories.  
 Book of Fables and Allegories.  
 Popular Poetry and Ballads, *gilt*.  
 Holiday Tales, *gilt*.  
 Bonaventure's Parables, *gilt*.  
 Kate Kavanagh, *gilt*.

German Ballads, *gilt*. [History.  
 Reeve's Old and New Testament  
 Twelve Tales for Children, by Mrs.  
 Arctic Voyages, *gilt*. [Parsons.  
 Fireside Stories, *gilt*.  
 Tales for the Home Circle, *gilt*.  
 Fables and Parables.  
 Afternoons with Mrs. Maitland, *gilt*.  
 Graces of Mary, *cloth*.  
 Celebrated Women, *gilt*.  
 Children of Mary, *gilt*.  
 Lives of Pious Youth, *gilt*.  
 Life of Du Guesclin, *gilt*.  
 Owen Evans, *limp cloth*.  
 Household Tales and Traditions.  
 †Mæus' German Popular Tales.  
 Hall's Irish, and other Tales, *fancy boards*.  
 Foundling of Sebastopol.  
 Tales of Home and Abroad, *fancy boards*.

## At 2s. 6d. each.

Fireside Readings, or Entertaining  
 Miscellany.  
 Breton Legends, *cloth*.  
 Life of St. Francis of Rome, *gilt*.  
 Tales for the Young.  
 Tales of the Festivals.  
 Heroines of Charity, *gilt*.  
 Hauff's Tales of Wonder, *gilt*.  
 Gérard the Lion-Killer, *gilt*.  
 Tales of Duty and Affection, *gilt*.  
 ——— the Crusades, *gilt*.

Pleasant Hours in Foreign Lands.  
 Adventures of a Schoolboy (Chop-  
 Robinson Crusoe, *gilt*. [part].  
 Vessels of the Sanctuary, and other  
 Grantley Manor, *fancy bds*. [Tales.  
 Manzoni's Betrothed, *ditto*.  
 Twelve Tales for Children (Mrs. Par-  
 sons), *gilt*.  
 Remarkable Conversions.  
 Father Connell, *gilt*.  
 Owen Evans, *cloth boards*.

Tales at Home and Abroad (Miss Pardoe).  
Cottage Conversations.  
Tales for Young Men and Women (Mrs. Parsons), *gilt*.

**At 3s. each.**

Discovery and Adventure.  
† Breton Legends, *gilt*.  
† Tales of Land and Sea, *gilt*.  
Tales of Enterprise and Peril.  
† Tales of Brigands and Daring and Lives of Holy Queens, *gilt*. [Peril.  
† Witch of Melton Hill.  
Tales of Celebrated Men, *gilt*.  
† Conscience's Veve, *gilt*.  
† Conscience's Miser, *gilt*.  
† Conscience's Demon of Gold, *gilt*.  
† Conscience's Tales of Flanders, *gilt*.  
† Conscience's Curse of the Village, *gilt*.  
† Conscience's Lion of Flanders, *gilt*.  
† Grantley Manor, *large ed.*, *gilt*.  
Gérard the Lion-Killer, *gilt*.  
† Tales of the French Revolution, *gilt*.  
Manzoni's Betrothed, *gilt*.  
Catholic Legends, *gilt*.

**At 3s. 6d. each.**

In the Snow. By Anderdon.  
Fabiola (Cardinal Wiseman).  
Callista (Dr. Newman).  
St. Dominic and the Dominicans.  
Catholic Legends, *full gilt, gilt edges*.  
Life of St. Charles Borromeo.  
De Vere's Selections from the Poets.  
Twelve Tales for the Young, *gilt*.  
Bridges' Ancient History.  
Canon Oakeley's Lyra Liturgica.  
Early Martyrs.

**At 4s. each.**

Fabiola, *gilt and gilt edges*.  
Callista, *gilt and gilt edges*.  
Marco Visconti.  
Life of M. Olier.  
The Three Chancellors.  
Bridges' Modern History.  
Life of Henry Suso.

**At 4s. 6d. each.**

Waterworth's England and Rome.  
Waterworth's Protestantism.  
Lydia.  
The Pilgrim.

**At 5s. each.**

Nellie Nettercliffe. By Miss Caddell.  
Strickland's Missions in India.

**At 6s. each.**

History of England. *Enlarged ed.*

The Two Bishops.  
Conscience's Curse of the Village, *fancy boards*. [*ditto*.  
Conscience's Miser, and other Tales, *ditto*.  
Conscience's Lion of Flanders, *ditto*.

**Sea Stories.**

Clifton Tales. First Series.  
Clifton Tales. Second Series.  
† Dyrbington (Mrs. Parsons).  
† Romantic Tales of Great Men.  
Bonnaval. By Dr. Anderdon.  
History of England, *for the young*.  
Tales and Legends from History.  
Life of St. Vincent de Paul.  
Life of St. Francis de Sales.  
Pictures of Christian Heroism.  
Short Stories and Poems. [VIII.  
Alice Sherwin, or the Days of Henry  
Popular Church History.  
Pictures, Tales, and Parables.  
Missions in the East and West.  
Missions in Japan and Paraguay.  
Twelve Tales for the Young.  
Hall's Irish and other Tales, *gilt*.

Diary of a Sister of Mercy.  
Lives of Pious Youth, and Children of Mary, *gilt*.  
Life of St. Anthony of Padua.  
Sketches of Catholic Life.  
Popular History of France.  
The Knights of St. John, with the Battle of Lepanto, &c. [*gilt*.  
Arabian Thousand and One Days, Select Shakespeare.  
Fragments of History.

Life of the Curé d'Ars.  
Fouque's Magic Ring, *gilt*.  
Fouque's Romantic Fiction, *gilt*.  
Fouque's Thiodolf, *gilt*.  
Patriots of the Tyrol.  
Father Cleveland. By Miss Stewart.  
Life in the Cloister. By *ditto*.

Allies' See of St. Peter.  
The War in La Vendée.  
Religious Orders, by Miss Taylor.  
Life of Father Ignatius Spencer.

Arabian Nights, *illustrated*.  
Ferncliffe.

Fouque's Seasons, *gilt*.



THE

# POPULAR CHOIR MANUAL:

CONTAINING MUSIC FOR THE WHOLE COURSE  
OF THE YEAR,

*Arranged in such a way as to be sung by the least  
experienced Choir.*

Morning, 3s. 6d.; Evening, 5s. 6d.; or in One Volume,  
cloth, 10s. 6d., post-free.

\* \* *The Pieces in this Volume, if published in the usual size, would not cost  
less than 10l. or 12l.*

*Sight-Singing made Easy.* A Manual for Choirs, Schools,  
and Choral Societies. Part I., price 6d.; Part II., price 6d. (Answers  
also for a first School Song-book.)

*This work will be found a sure and agreeable guide to correct singing, and is  
of unexampled cheapness.*

*Hymns for the Year (293).* 3d.; cloth, 5d.

*Melodies for the Hymns for the Year.* 1s.; cloth, 1s. 6d.

The two together, cloth, 2s.

*The Popular Hymn and Tune-Book:* being the Vocal Scores  
and Accompaniments for the Melodies. 1 vol. cloth, 10s. 6d.

*The Music in this work (the cheapest ever printed), which commences with  
the very simplest Melodies, will, it is believed, be found thoroughly appropriate,  
as well as easy and attractive in style.*

*The Rosary; with easy Music for Children, &c.* 2d.

*Hints on Teaching Schools, &c. to Sing.* For a Penny  
Stamp.

*Hymns for the Seasons of the Year, and other Occasions.*

In Full Score, for Voices and Accompaniment; English Words,

1. Advent and Christmas, 6d.

2. The Holy Name, 6d.

3. Lent, and the Passion, 6d.

4. Easter and Ascension, 6d.

5. Whitsuntide, 6d.

6. Trinity, 6d.

7. All Saints and Heaven, 6d.

8. Hymns to our Saviour, 6d.

6. Hymns on the Christian Life,

10. Hymns of Praise, 6d. [6d.

11. Hymns for Morning, 6d.

12. Hymns for Evening, 6d.

*Nine Short Motetts.* For Two, Three, and Four Voices,  
by CASALI, MARCELLO, CZERNY. 2s. Well adapted for small Choirs.

*Easy and effective Settings of Hymns and Antiphons.*

Ave Regina. ROMBERG, 6d.

Regina Cœli. O'LEARY, 4d.

Lauda Sion. Ditto, 6d.

O Filii et Filiaz. SCHACHNER, 4d.

Salve Regina. RICHARDSON, 1s.

Alma Redemptoris. Ditto, 1s.

[For other Music for Church and Home use, see the Complete Music Catalogue.]

BURNS, OATES, & Co., 63 Paternoster Row, E.C.

